



THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

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TAUKTAE POUNDS WEST COAST, GUJARAT LANDFALL ON MAY 18

It has intensified into a very severe cyclonic storm, with wind speed reaching 175 kmph. Orange alert in three Kerala dists

KERALA DAMS OPENED, EVACUATIONS IN K'TAKA

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday virtually met the chief ministers of states on the west coast to discuss preparedness to handle the effects of Cyclone Tauktae. Faced with copious inflow, Kerala opened floodgates of dams, while downpour in Karnataka prompted large-scale evacuations. Response teams on the Maharashtra coast were on high alert

GUJARAT COAST BRACES FOR IMPACT

- Squally winds and heavy rains reported in Goa. Mumbai officials shifted Covid patients, fearing power failure due to the cyclone
- Tauktae to make landfall between Porbandar and Mahuva in Bhavnagar district; fishers, coastal residents being evacuated
- Huge tidal waves, strong winds and heavy downpour predicted

High alert

OFFICIALS WORKING TO ENSURE UNINTERRUPTED COVID CARE

Slow off the starting blocks for Covaxin mass production

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ New Delhi

INDIA got off the blocks slowly to make Bharat Biotech's Covaxin an open source vaccine within the country for its mass production, as any company that participates in it would need at least six months for the assembly line to start rolling. For jabs such as Covaxin need highly sophisticated Biosafety Level 3 (BSL-3) labs, which is only available with

Bharat Biotech at the moment. BSL-3 labs work with agents that could cause serious or potentially lethal disease through inhalation to the personnel, and may contaminate the environment, hence the high-safety parameters. While India has just over a dozen such labs at present, most of them are with academic institutions for testing and research. Upgrading existing BSL-3 labs to produce Covaxin is a long-term process, says a

senior Bharat Biotech official. Sudhanshu Vrat, a virologist, told *TNIE*, "The government laboratories we have at present across India are only meant for research and are not designed for production. Even if a pharma company starts work to set up a BSL-3 lab, it will take at least three to six months to do so, after which it will require certification." "Even if we assume that the government does the certification in a week's time, vaccine

XPLORÉ

NEW TECHNOLOGY IN BIO-SAFETY LABS

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ON BIOSAFETY STANDARDS

PAGE 12

production and hitting the market will take more than six months." Eminent virologist Dr Jacob John concurred. He said even if the Centre ropes in additional labs to produce vaccines, it may take three to six months for the vaccine to be produced. "By that time, the pandemic itself would be over. We must have done this by October 2020, so that there was enough vaccine by January this year," Dr John said.

Cyclone Tauktae leaves four dead in state

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

CYCLONE Tauktae that has been ravaging states along the Western coast in the country left at least four dead in Karnataka on Sunday. Seven districts -- Udupi, Dakshina Kannada, Uttara Kannada, Kodagu, Shivamogga, Chikkamagaluru and Hassan -- have been the worst hit in the state.



The beach at Baikambady, Surathkal, is strewn with debris in the aftermath of Cyclone Tauktae, on the outskirts of Mangaluru on Sunday | EXPRESS

According to a situation report by the Karnataka State Disaster Management Authority, till Sunday evening, 98 villages in 20 taluks suffered extensive damage. Udupi, Shivamogga, Uttara Kannada and Chikkamagaluru reported one death each. Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa on Sunday called deputy commissioners and in-charge ministers of each of the affected districts to take stock of the situation and assured them of all assistance. Six out of the seven worst-hit districts have also been struggling with a surge in Covid cases. "The CM asked the in-charge ministers and DCs to

pay attention to rescue and relief measures as well as Covid management simultaneously. He has assured them of any additional assistance required. DCs can contact the minister concerned or him directly," said a statement from the Chief Minister's Office. Later in the evening, the CM once again spoke to Chief Secretary P Ravi Kumar and DCs of Dakshina Kannada, Uttara Kannada and Udupi, urging them to rescue fishermen stranded at sea.

State to spend ₹15 cr to strengthen SDRF

The government is strengthening the State Disaster Response Force, Home Minister Basavaraj Bommai said, adding that ₹15 crore will be spent to get new equipment and raise two more SDRF companies.

NATIONWIDE	MAY 15	MAY 16
Fresh cases	3,26,098	3,11,170
Recoveries	3,53,299	3,62,437
Deaths	3,890	4,077

JAB-O-METER	May 15	May 16
TAKE YOUR SHOT	17,14,247 doses	17,33,232 doses
TOTAL DOSES	18,22,20,164	

Chief of Centre's Covid advisory group resigns

Shahid Jameel was critical of govt's Covid response during the ongoing second wave

SUMI SUKANYA DUTTA @ New Delhi

SENIOR virologist Shahid Jameel on Sunday resigned as the chair of the scientific advisory group of Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG), a forum established by the Centre in December last. It was set up for lab and epidemiological surveillance of strains of the Covid-19 virus circulating in India.

ter concerns over B117 variant, first detected in the UK, having reached India.

Under the consortium, 10 national laboratories equipped to study virus variants were brought under the aegis of the National Centre for Disease Control. The regional genome sequencing labs, which are part of the project, include CSIR Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology in Delhi, CSIR



'Stubborn response'

Jameel was critical of the government's Covid policies. Most recently, he had written a piece in the *New York Times*, saying scientists in India were facing "stubborn response to evidence-based policy making".

The forum has been marred by severe fund crunch since the beginning as a result of which the work it was tasked to do has progressed on a much lesser speed than projected.

Clock ticks away for Karnataka: Over 82% wait to be vaccinated

RAMU PATIL & CHETANA BELAGERE @ Bengaluru

THE clock is ticking away for Karnataka on the vaccine front even as the anticipated third wave looms large.

Over 82 per cent of those eligible for Covid vaccinations are yet to be inoculated against the dreaded disease, while 66.4 lakh beneficiaries are waiting for their second dose.

In absolute numbers, those waiting to be vaccinated account for about 4.22 crore across the state among the vaccine-eligible population of about 5.11 crore people (above

VAX WORRIES - 2

18 years of age). The numbers show a grim picture. The Health Department may find it extremely difficult to speed up the vaccination even as it grapples with shortages.

From January 16 (when the vaccination programme was launched) till May 16, up to 1,11,88,143 people have been

KARNATAKA	MAY 15	MAY 16
Fresh cases	41,664	31,531
Recoveries	34,425	36,475
Deaths	349	403

vaccinated. This includes those who have taken the first dose and those completing both doses.

As per data accessed by *The New Indian Express*, the state's total target was to vaccinate 8.6 lakh Health Care Workers with both doses, but so far only 4,60,437 have completed both vaccines.

At least 2.4 lakh health care workers are waiting for the second dose, while 1.6 lakh for their first dose.

To vaccinate this segment, the government requires 5.6 lakh doses.

CONTINUED ON: P3

As state battles Covid, Railway Minister seeks ₹847 crore in dues

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

EVEN as the Karnataka Government grapples with shortage of vaccines, oxygen and hospital beds, and stretches its resources to manage the humongous Covid-19 crisis, besides the latest havoc wreaked by Cyclone Tauktae along the state's coast, the Union Government has sprung a shock.

It has asked the State Government to deposit its outstanding share of ₹847.02 crore for railway projects implemented on cost-sharing basis by both, as well as acquire land required for three ongoing railway projects. It has also asked the state to deposit its financial share for projects proposed for the ongoing financial year.

In a letter to Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa, Railway Minister Piyush Goyal said the execution of cost-sharing projects for Karnataka was getting affected because the state was not depositing its share. An amount of ₹847.02 crore was outstanding, it said.

Also urging the state to hand over land required for projects at the earliest, the letter dated May 3 says, "It is informed that Railways had deposited ₹80.63 crore acquisition of 608.21 hectares of land for three railway projects, but land is yet to be handed over by the State Government. Non-acquisition of land is resulting in delay in execution of projects, besides blockage of Railway's capital with State Government, which otherwise could have been utilised for execution of projects in the State."



WITH THIS ISSUE THE ESSENTIAL CAMPUS DIGEST edex 32 PAGES, INCLUDING 16 OF EDEX (TABLOID), 4 OF CITY EXPRESS

RIGHT MODEL

AP village shows the way to keep virus at bay

SISTLA DAKSHINA MURTHY @ Vijayawada

EVEN as Covid-19 has been widespread across the country, here is a village in Andhra Pradesh which has remained unaffected by the virus so far. Duggiralapadu in G Konduru mandal of Krishna district is probably the only village in the entire State with the distinction of not recording even a single Covid case so far.

The village adjacent to neighbouring Telangana has a population of 1,000. Majority of people are dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. The villagers have taken all necessary precautions since the outbreak of pandemic to protect themselves. Curbs have been imposed on entry of outsiders, with entry points



Villagers spray disinfectant at Duggiralapadu village in Andhra Pradesh | SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

to the village being barricaded.

G Mallikharjuna Rao (54), a resident of Duggiralapadu, attributes non-emergence of even a single Covid case in the village to strict adherence to Covid guidelines by all. "No one in

the village ventures out without wearing a mask and carrying sanitiser," he says.

Sanitation workers carry out fogging operations and spraying of sodium hypochlorite solution in the village twice a week. Drains in the village are cleaned on alternate days. "We have eight provision stores in our village. People of one ward are allowed to purchase essential commodities on a particular day to avoid crowding," says A Nagalakshmi, another resident. The people have unanimously decided not to conduct any festival, fair or other ritual in the village to avoid public gathering. No one in Duggiralapadu attends functions in relatives' houses in neighbouring villages during Covid times.

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Frequent power cuts put home patients at risk

S LALITHA @Bengaluru

RECURRING power disruption in Indiranagar I and II Stages, with a massive 14-hour outage earlier this week, left residents in dismay. The bigger fear is that such power cuts will put the lives of patients, who depend on oxygen concentrators, at risk.

Dr NVS Krishnan, a paediatrician who lives on 1st Main Road, was among those affected. "Power supply, which went off at 4.30 pm on Wednesday, was restored to some extent on Thursday and completely at 11 am on Friday. By then, the ice for the vaccines I had stored to be administered to children had melted," he told *The New Indian Express*.

He also knew two patients who were using oxygen concentrators and had suffered due to the power disruption. "I called up the Bescom helpline 1912 at least 40 times. Clinging to a Covid helpline has ruined it as there were only automated responses. Reaching out through WhatsApp and

email did not help," he said. There is a transformer on the road which turns dysfunctional even at the slightest shower, and a long-term solution is needed, Dr Krishnan said.

Aga Sultan, a consulting engineer, pointed out that with the rise in Covid cases, every third or fourth house may require an oxygen concentrator. "What happens if power goes off for hours like this? This is alarming and requires urgent redressal," Sultan said.

Assistant Executive Engineer, E-6, Manjunath said the problem occurred after the Bescom line got damaged at four places due to BBMP TenderSURE work as well as OFC cable work done by Reliance Jio on Old Madras Road, CMH Road, 100-ft Road and opposite ESI Hospital. "We have rectified the problem for now," he said.

BBMP Executive Engineer Geetha claimed that their white-topping work had no connection with Bescom and hung up abruptly. Reliance Jio could not be reached.



The BESCOM line on CMH Road was damaged due to infrastructure work by other agencies | EXPRESS

BESCOM linemen down with Covid too

While some of the residents were sympathetic that Bescom was working on skeletal staff, as numerous linemen are down with Covid, others were concerned about the old electrical infrastructure. Assistant Executive Engineer Manjunath said that six out of 14 linemen and two engineers in-charge of the area were infected with Covid, and they were doing their best to help the residents.

DESPITE DEMAND, JUST HANDFUL OF BEDS BOOKED VIA PORTAL

As hospitals cite emergencies to deny requests, officials want O₂ beds to be set up outside premises

BOSKY KHANNA @Bengaluru

ONLY five ICU beds were booked directly for patients through the COVID+ Hospital Bed Management System (CHBMS) portal last week. "The average beds blocked has been 1.19," showed the portal last week. This is despite the demand for beds, especially the ones with oxygen, being very high.

Three beds were booked directly on May 8, and 12 on May 7. Only 20 high-dependency units (HDU) beds and three ICU with ventilator beds were booked on May 9. Also, the portal shows that no ICU and oxygen beds are available. Due to rising demand, the government has set a two-day deadline for the BBMP to create 5,000 beds in the city, of which, at least 30 per cent should have an oxygen line. From May 7-10, in four days, 3,349 beds have been booked through the portal. Of this 2,222 are general, 1,043 are HDU, 53 ICU and 31 ICU with ventilators.

An official handling the bed allocation system said that many are waiting because most of the beds have been filled up under step up cases where patients in general beds or other beds were moved to these as they became critical.

The official also doubted that there could be cases where some with influence or by paying a high price, had moved to ICU or HDC beds. So, to avoid any doubts, the hospitals are being asked to share reports of step-up facilities also.

This doubt has emerged now as most of the time, when the portal opens and cases are referred, hospitals decline stating there is an in-house emergency. "An emergency situation would arise in 5-10% cases and not for 40-50% cases. But hospitals are now citing in-house emergencies most of the times and the officials deployed are not updating the portal or the head office on real-time basis. This is why oxygen beds outside hospitals has to be set up," the official noted. The help desk nodal officers have been instructed to do independent reality checks also and give information.



With hospitals struggling to meet the requirement for oxygen beds, Deputy CM and Transport Minister Laxman Savadi launched the first free OxyBus in Bengaluru on Sunday, to address the severe shortage. While the Transport Department will provide the vehicles, soon to be available across the state, the oxygen expense will be borne by NGOs. The second mobile oxygen vehicle will be launched in Chikmagalur on Monday | EXPRESS

Kanakapura Road RWAs to offer car ride, ambulance service for patients



Members of 'Changemakers of Kanakapura Road' plan to revive the ambulance service for residents which was launched during the first wave | EXPRESS

S LALITHA @Bengaluru

IN light of people facing hardship to get taxis and ambulances during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, an umbrella organisation of over 60 resident welfare organisations in Kanakapura Road has decided to aid its residents. It will offer a car free of cost to help residents reach anywhere for treatment as well as revive its popular ambulance service it ran when the pandemic broke out last year.

Speaking to *The New Indian Express*, Abdul Aleem, president of 'Changemakers of Kanakapura Road' said, "With Covid cases rising, we want to help out the nearly 30,000 residents who are our members. We have arranged for an Innova car through Sathya Sai Tourist service. Our group will bear the diesel and driver charges." Aleem said that when people use their own car to ferry their

Covid-positive family members, there is a big risk to others using it. "We want to offer this alternative to them. We will ensure the vehicle is fully sanitised," he said.

A popular ambulance service the group ran last year and stopped two months ago, will be restarted in a week. "It costs us around Rs 2.4 lakh to maintain the vehicle supplied by JK Ambulance. We had collected Rs 60 per family for fuel and driver costs last time and plan to repeat it. We have three medical staffers available 24x7 and two drivers to run the ambulance," he said.

A ventilator, suction apparatus, cardiac monitor, oxygen cylinder and infusion pumps are the equipments in the ambulance. "There is a backup arrangement too with our provider so that if there is an emergency and someone has booked this ambulance, another one can be supplied, he added.

Lockdown forces villagers to live with stench of dead fish from nearby lake

BOSKY KHANNA @Bengaluru

PEOPLE residing around Motanalluru lake were forced to live with the stench of dead fish emanating from the water body for nearly a week, till they got the officials to act, and that too only after a social media post highlighted their plight.

The villagers had to take the help of lake activists to get the officials' attention, as all their requests were falling on deaf ears. "We first saw dead fish floating on the lake surface on Monday. Multiple calls were made to officials of Karnataka State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB), Minor Irrigation and Anekal Panchayat, only to hear that no one could come owing to the lockdown. When the stench became unbearable,



we had to approach of activists. They were also unsuccessful initially, but on Saturday, a team of officials inspected the site," said a local.

The lake is located 16 km from Koramanagala. It is not in BBMP limits, as it sits on the border of the Mahadevapura constituency and Anekal town. Locals said they also requested MLA Shivanna, who mentioned that the lake is a part of the KC Valley linking project.

Kavitha Reddy, an activist and village resident, said, "We have been requesting the officials to take water samples and control the entry of pollutants. The villagers depend upon the lake water, which should be protected," she said.

A senior KSPCB official said that the team found that the fish were actually dead for two days, and it was because of the sudden dip in dissolved oxygen (DO). "The sudden dip over the last two days, coupled with the inflow of effluents and pesticides from surrounding industries and agricultural fields has killed the fish," the official said, adding that in March also, samples were taken and it was found that the water is fit only for agricultural work.

Daily Starscope

PETER VIDAL

17th May: What really happens in the sky? Have we been visited by aliens from other worlds? Some people don't believe in UFOs. I'm not sure if I do or not. But then I saw an interview with Buzz Aldrin, one of the astronauts who flew to the Moon way back in 1969. He described strange objects coming up to the spacecraft and flying around it having a good look. Whatever he saw, he saw something!

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

You still have a fair amount of energy, and you mustn't waste time if you have important matters to complete. By next week your stars will be more relaxed, which could be a relief but also indicates that it might be somewhat less easy to achieve your aims.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

Seen from one angle your stars present you as being on the winning side and not likely to be deceived or exploited. The essential message, though, is that you can turn all available circumstances to good advantage if you throw yourself into idealistic endeavours, forgetting self-interest and trusting in the future.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

The weight of celestial patterns is still on your side, enabling you to bring almost any development to your benefit. At home, it's all a question of being businesslike, and insisting that the people obey the rules, watch the clock and do what they're told.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

You can keep a secret, but only for a little while longer. Today's stars tell a double story, urging you to talk to partners, but advising you to hold your tongue when it comes to certain delicate matters. The last thing you want to do now is cause offence.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

The business of day-to-day survival looms large, and it is those little but necessary things that you must turn your attention. No item should be considered too small or too dull to warrant your best efforts. And don't imagine that it's OK to leave routine matters to others just because they're boring.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sept 23)

Happily, lunar alignments are infusing and enlivening the energies of the zodiac occupied by your sign. The consequence is that you could be rather more sensitive than usual, but also increasingly able to appreciate emotional improvements. And if you feel better, so should the people you love.

LIBRA (Sept 24 - Oct 23)

You would be wise to keep yourself to yourself today, at least when you sense that irrational opposition is looming. There may be a family mystery to solve, but it seems unlikely that answers will be available before tomorrow, so you should be patient.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 22)

There is much to be said for teamwork today, so make an effort to co-operate, and don't even think about going it alone. If you're still recovering from a trauma at work or a rejection at home, you will probably have forgotten all about it by next week.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 23 - Dec 22)

No amount of argument must prevent you from forging ahead with major alterations in your personal life. Partners' advice, while well-intentioned, often seems to miss the point, so make your own decisions today. Mind you, you'll have to accept responsibility if your plans don't work out.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

There seems to be a powerful indication of long-distance contacts today, perhaps associated with family connections. You may actually be dreaming of life in distant parts. It would be nice to escape, if only for a while. Why not see if it can be arranged?

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

The general planetary indications are positive, but the upside that you'll be given a chance to make firm constructive progress, and then to sort out a hundred and one practical details and irritations. Other people will accept your plans - but only if you give them good reason.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

This is one week when planetary patterns urge you not to postpone a fresh start any longer. There are personal contacts out there which should now be converted into firm friendships. Close partners should be willing to go along with you, at least for part of the way.

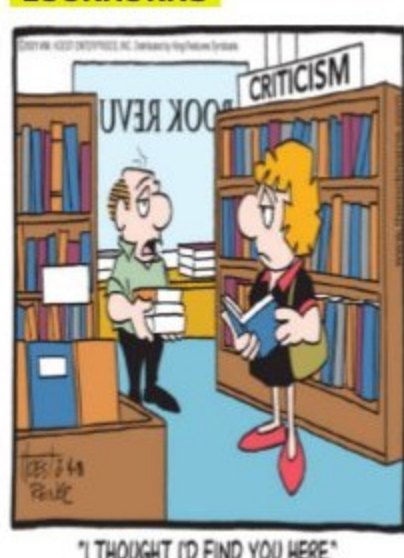
THE PHANTOM



BEETLEBAILEY



LOCKHORNS



HI AND LOIS



BLONDIE



DENNIS THE MENACE



CROSS WORD



SU DO KU



JUMBLE



ACROSS

- Pain (6,5)
- In a scramble can go to this figure (7)
- Home for a rabbit is pointless for a donkey (5)
- Impose duty (4)
- They may put up their houses for sale (8)
- A cook may use a tin one (6)
- Let out the smallest amount, say (6)
- He sends abroad for money (8)
- Emperor in knight's armour (4)
- Play some instruments (5)
- Where you may buy duty-free wine on display (7)
- Fill a position as a successful astronaut? (2,4,5)

DOWN

- Tries new form of worship (5)
- Night without end - almost (4)
- Get off or put on the line (4,2)
- Pretty girl in red and rose (8)
- Still out of tune? (7)
- Consort very disturbed by argument (11)
- Like one who cares for others - or is a decent sort (11)
- The offer of money may make him cross (8)
- Grass around the seaport (7)
- Gale blows itself out to a smooth finish (6)
- Passionless disciple (5)
- The expedition set off (4)

SATURDAY'S SOLUTIONS

Across: 1. Adrift, 4. Africa, 9. 10. 10. Preserve, 12. Echo, 13. Madam, 14. Area, 17. Legal changes, 20. Burning fever, 23. Ache, 24. Albot, 25. Tail, 28. Cash sale, 29. At will, 30. Sentinel, 31. Cynnet.

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer here: **ANSWERS TOMORROW**

SATURDAY'S Jumbles: EMCEE, FORTY, ROTARY, SPOKEN

ANSWER: They leased a home instead of buying one because it was their - "PREFER-RENTS"

BJP MLAs blocked 2K beds for constituents: HDK

Former chief minister says he got MP Tejasvi Surya's claims investigated, govt sources confirm his findings

BANSY KALAPPA @ Bengaluru

BENGALURU South BJP MP Tejasvi Surya appears to have unwittingly opened a Pandora's box when he recently barged into a BBMP war zone office and castigated the officials, and blamed 17 minority community staffers of operating a bed blocking scam in Bengaluru.

Contrary to this, it is now being alleged that it is BJP MLAs from Bengaluru who had blocked 2,000 beds for their constituents. It is no secret that people continue to die due to shortage of beds and oxygen in Bengaluru.

Surya reportedly apologised for his demeanour later, but stopped short of explaining what the bed blocking scam

was all about. While the scam stirred up a great deal of curiosity, it piqued former Chief Minister and JDS leader H D Kumaraswamy enough to carry out his own investigation. Kumaraswamy claims that BJP MLAs had ensured that at least 2,000 beds were blocked for their supporters and constituents across all zones.

He said that around April 18, when cases were multiplying, a meeting was held under the leadership of Revenue Minister R Ashoka, where city BJP MLAs had sought one hundred beds each for people from their constituency. They had finally settled for around 2,000 beds, which were

promptly blocked across zones. Each MLA was given a certain number of beds to be allotted to constituents. This is at the core of the bed blocking scam, which has ensured that the needy have been deprived of beds at a time when Bengaluru cases were peaking. Often, an MLA would not be able to fill up the requisite quota of beds with patients, the former CM alleged. "A proper investigation by the authorities will bring out all the ugly details," he added.

Kumaraswamy said that a certain Sumanth, said to be Surya's supporter, would interfere in bed allocation, and this had been confirmed by a source in the

government. He also said that a certain person from the BJP had called on behalf of the MP, and asked for beds in well-known hospitals to be reserved for them. One highly-placed source in the government said that Tejasvi Surya had openly sought "20 per cent bed share" in Apollo Hospitals and two other big hospitals in Bengaluru South.

Sources in the government confirmed that BJP leaders were behind the bed blocking scam and those in charge of the eight city zones have blocked beds and continue to do so. One minister had reportedly visited the war room and asked officials to keep aside beds for his constituents.

In Bommanhalli Zone, MLA

Satish Reddy's deeds were exposed, but there are many others responsible in the seven other zones, sources said. Reddy and his supporters would interfere in the war room bed allotment process. In fact, there was a serious altercation between an IAS officer and Reddy's supporter over this issue recently. After the recent expose, Satish Reddy went on a splurge and got paid advertisements about himself splashed in several publications, seeking to correct his image, sources said.

The city has 28 MLAs, with almost an equal number belonging to the BJP and Congress. Not surprisingly, Congress MLAs have repeatedly complained that they are unable to find beds for their constituents.

Consider milk co-op workers as Covid warriors: HDK

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

JDS legislature party chief and former chief minister H D Kumaraswamy on Sunday raised a red flag about the rapid rise in Covid-19 infections in rural areas. Highlighting that many of the patients, due to lack of awareness, are ending up supplying milk to dairies and inadvertently spreading the infection, he said, "This is a new problem in rural areas. The Cooperation Department, Karnataka Milk Federation and dairy farmers' union should take note of this urgently. If action is not

taken immediately, the repercussions will be huge." Insisting that awareness is the need of the hour, Kumaraswamy said that non-infected people only must be allowed to milch and transport the milk to dairies to prevent the virus spread. "Those coming to supply milk should mandatorily wear masks, sanitise their hands and maintain distance," he added. Pointing out that milk is an essential commodity, Kumaraswamy said that those working with milk production unions should be considered as Covid warriors and vaccinated on priority.



Bed blocking scam active in Mysuru, alleges Cong

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Mysuru

IN a startling accusation, the Congress has alleged that a bed blocking scam, aided by the ruling party, is active in Mysuru.

"While many are dying due to delay in getting beds and medical attention, the war room and task force are systematically populated with BJP workers who give prominence to people in proximity with the party and its leaders," M Lakshman, Congress spokesman, said at a media interaction here on Sunday.

He alleged that the lobby is charging ₹8,500 - 10,000 secure beds, and asked how Mysuru-Kodagu MP Pratap Simha got a bed in no time, despite being asymptomatic. "He is in a private hospital, while the public has to go through an ordeal. This shows how beds are blocked for them," he said.

Lakshman said that while the government is lax about the situation and District Minister S T Somashekhar is indulging in mere 'photo-ops', it is not allowing well-intentioned NGOs and individuals to pitch in. "We are not seeing many volunteers and NGOs getting on to the streets with help, unlike last year, since authorities are hounding them through agencies like what they did with Indian Youth Congress chief B V Srinivas," he said.



Questioning the cut in testing numbers, Lakshman said testing centres are only doing a limited number of tests, and called the move "dangerous" as it can trigger a rash of cases in villages. Calling the announcement for global tenders to procure vaccines a gimmick, he said that with vaccines already in short supply, how can they expect manufacturers to rush with bids.

Lakshman also blamed the government for procuring 15,000 oxygen concentrators for ₹135 crore from a new vendor, without following due tender procedure, and alleged that more details about this deal will be released in the coming days. He also termed as "false", claims of MP Pratap Simha reaching help to Chamarajana-gar, since the HC committee report does not mention it.

Congress leaders distribute medical kits to the needy at SMT hospital in Mysuru on Sunday

While many are dying due to delay in getting beds and medical attention, the war room and task force are systematically populated with BJP workers who give prominence to people in proximity with the party

M Lakshman, Congress spokesman

EXPRESS READ

Use a year's pay of legislators: Mahesh

Mysuru: Days after the State Government ordered donation of one year's salary of all ministers towards Covid-19 relief, JDS MLA Sa Ra Mahesh on Sunday said the government must utilise one year's salary of all legislators as well. He added that the government has failed to announce a special package to those who are under financial distress amid the lockdown this time.

SDRF to get more teeth, new blood

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

THE State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) is all set to get more teeth as it is being strengthened with sophisticated equipment worth crores, said Home Minister Basavaraj Bommai.

After inspecting new equipment procured at a cost of Rs 15 crore, here on Sunday, Bommai said that the government has decided to establish two more companies of the SDRF - one in Davanagere and another between Hubballi-Dharwad and Belagavi. "Already, four companies of SDRF are stationed in Bengaluru, Mangaluru, Kalaburagi and Mysuru, with a total of 434 staffers," he said, adding that 100 more ex-servicemen will be recruited to the force this year.

He said that equipment such as speed boats, stretchers, scuba diving suits, underwater diving gear, special lights, hydraulic jacks, wood and concrete cutting machines, hydraulic heavyweight chipping hammers, and others were procured at Rs 15 crore released last year and another Rs 15 crore will be sanctioned this year.

"A batch of these equipment has already reached cyclone Tauktae-hit Udupi. Over 1,000 personnel of various departments are deployed in the cyclone-hit areas. SDRF men from Mangaluru and Bengaluru have been sent there and men from Kalaburagi will also be sent if and when needed," Bommai added. "About 34 houses have been damaged in Udupi due to cyclone and the residents have been rescued. People living in low-lying areas have been shifted. Eight people were missing after a boat capsized near the coast of Padubidri and Surathkal. While some bodies have been recovered, two were rescued."

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

MEANWHILE, among frontline workers (FLWs), of the total six lakh target, 1.2 lakh are still due for their first dose and nearly 3 lakh for their second shot. A total of 5.4 lakh vaccines are needed for this group. The Health Department officials, however, confirmed that the state has only 1.5 lakh doses of Covaxin and 6.5 lakh of Covishield.

The Centre's decision to extend the interval between two doses of Covishield (which is the maximum number of vaccines administered in the State) from the existing six-eight weeks to 12-16 weeks will give a breather to 1.68 lakh people.

However, public health experts say the State still needs to vaccinate 4.40 lakh people waiting for the second dose of Covaxin and it cannot wait as they have already completed four weeks. The State Government lacked micro-planning when Covid vaccination drive first began, but at least now, this needs

PRESENT VACCINE SCENARIO AS ON MAY 14, 2021					Due for second dose	
Beneficiaries	Total Target	Due for 1st dose	Due for 2nd dose	Doses required	Covishield (completed 12 weeks)	Covaxin (Completed 4 weeks)
HCWs	8.6 lakh	1.6 lakh	2.4 lakh	5.6 lakh	1,12,169	12,958
FLWs	6 lakh	1.2 lakh	3 lakh	5.4 lakh	56,187	14,105
45 and above	171 lakh	95 lakh	60 lakh	250 lakh	0	0
18-44 years	326 lakh	325 lakh	1 lakh	651 lakh	0	0
Total	511.6 lakh	422.5 lakh	66.4 lakh	912 lakhs	1,68,356	4,40,097

Source: State Health Department

to be set in place, say experts.

According to Dr Giridhara R Babu, epidemiologist, Public Health Institute, and member of state Covid Technical Advisory Committee, "The State Government needs to micro-plan. There is no other option. Procurement and supply of vaccines will surely happen. But if we don't have proper

micro-level planning, we'll still end up not vaccinating even 50 per cent of our population with both doses. Those who are due for the second dose will also keep waiting over many more months."

Dr Manjunath CN of Jayadeva Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases says, "We will soon see the third wave. The idea was to vaccinate the

entire population before that, which is by August or at least before October. However, to vaccinate 4.22 crore people with the first dose and 66.4 lakh with the second dose, we require 9.12 crore vaccines." He points out that if the entire vaccination-eligible population is to be covered, 4 to 4.5 lakh vaccinations need to be carried out per day.

The state govt needs to micro-plan. There is no other option. Supply of vaccines will surely happen. Dr Giridhara R Babu, Epidemiologist

SAD DEMISE



Dr. K N Krishnamurthy Sharma-ji
(Astrologer, President, Badarayana Prastishana, Editor, Shukavani Magazine, Shankar Nagar, Bengaluru)

We regret to inform the sad demise of Dr. K N Krishnamurthy Sharma-ji on **08.05.2021** due to cardiac arrest

praying for his sadgati
Relatives and friends

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PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the general public that my client Mr. Shabbir Ahmed Baig, son of late Navab Jan, residing at No.458, Mosque Street, Off. Begur Road, Bommanahalli, Bengaluru 560 068 is the absolute owner of all that piece and parcel of the B.O.A. site property bearing No. 621, situated at Hosur Sarjapura Layout, (Agara) III Sector, Bengaluru 560 034, measuring East to West: 06.09 Mtrs. and North to South 09.14 Mtrs. totally measuring 55.66 Mtrs. My client has lost the original Sale Deed dated: 02-08-2003, pertaining to the aforesaid property vide document No.8570/2003-2004 of Book 1 stored in C.D.No.114, registered in the office of the Senior Sub-Registrar, Bangalore South Taluk. My client has made search of the aforesaid document and inspite of his best efforts the same has not been traced so far. In this regard, my client has lodged police complaint vide Lost Report No.101540/2021, dated 15-05-2021. If anyone makes any transaction in respect of the aforesaid property they will be doing so at their own cost and risk and the same is not binding on my client. If any person is having the custody of the aforesaid original sale deed or finds the same, he/she shall contact the undersigned with the said document within SEVEN days.

Sd/- **Mohamed Zulfikar Ahmed**, Advocate
No.57, D.K. Street, Shivajinagar, Bengaluru 560 001. M.No. 98451 39284
Dated: 17-05-2021

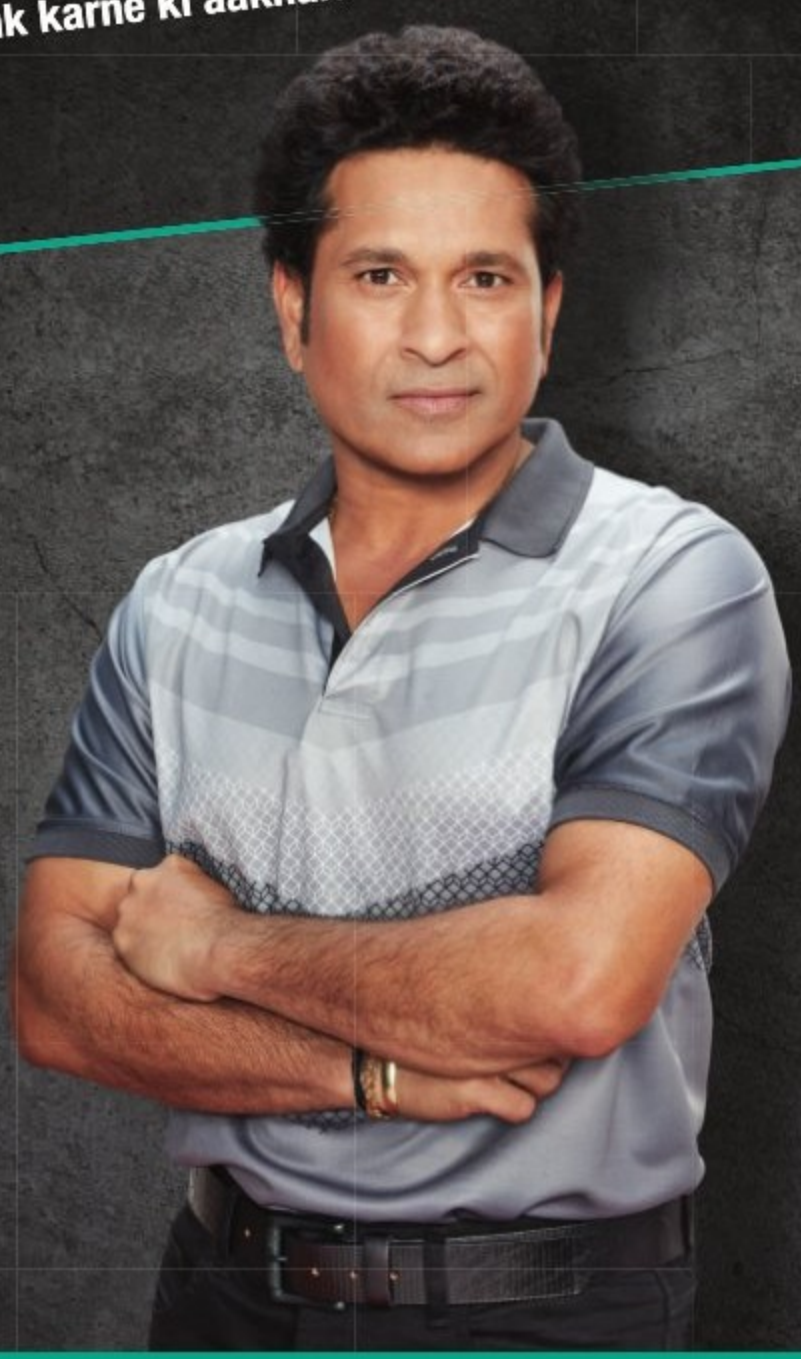
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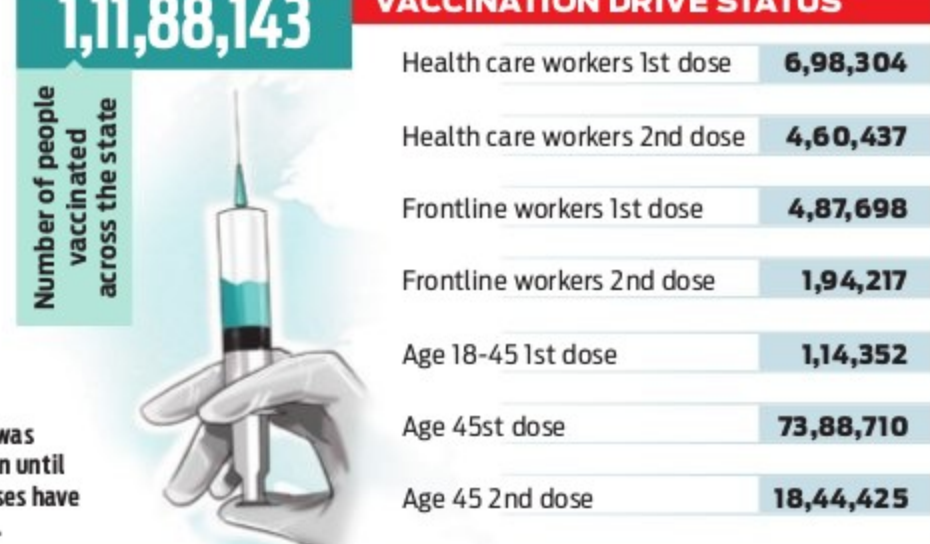
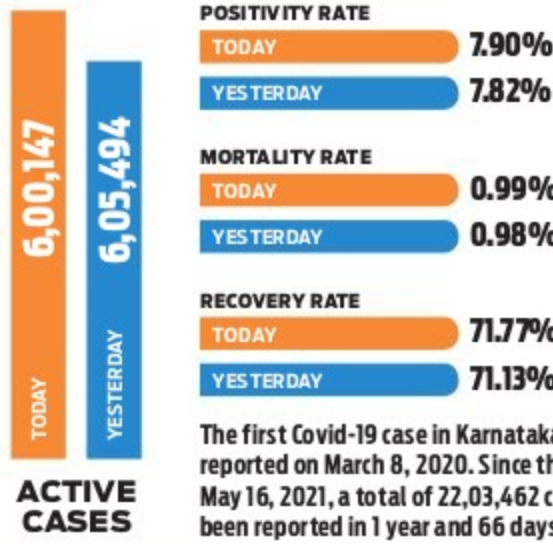
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TRACKING COVID-19 SPEED AND RISE OF COVID-19 CASES IN KARNATAKA



DISTRICT-WISE COVID CASES LAST 24 HOURS	8,344	Bagalakot: 431	Chamarajanagar: 440	Dakshina Kannada: 957	Hassan: 1,182	Kolar: 569	Raichur: 464	Udupi: 745
BENGALURU URBAN	1,082	Ballari: 1,729	Chikkaballapura: 558	Davanagere: 1,155	Haveri: 184	Koppal: 617	Ramanagara: 403	Uttara Kannada: 1,087
BENGALURU RURAL		Belagavi: 1,762	Chikkamagaluru: 963	Dharwad: 937	Kalaburagi: 645	Mandya: 709	Shivamogga: 643	Vijayapura: 330
		Bidar: 129	Chitradurga: 640	Gadag: 453	Kodagu: 191	Mysuru: 1,811	Tumakuru: 2,138	Yadgir: 233

BOWRING TO TAKE IN BLACK FUNGUS CASES

Panel to be formed to look into issue; 20K doses of Amphotericin B drug sought from Centre, says Sudhakar

4 cases in Bagalkot, Vijayapura districts

Mahesh M Goudar @ Bagalkot/Vijayapura: Bagalkot and Vijayapura districts have reported four cases of black fungus (Mucormycosis) among patients who have recovered from Covid, creating fear among those cured. Three cases have been reported from Bagalkot and one from Vijayapura. Of the three infected in Bagalkot district, one each is from Bagalkot town, Bilagi and Mudhol. One has gone to Hyderabad, another to Bengaluru and the last has remained at a primary health centre in Bilagi. Dr Ananth Desai, Bagalkot DHO, said, "We don't have the stock of the drug, Amphotericin, to treat black fungus. We have alerted the government." DC Dr K Rajendra chaired an emergency virtual meeting with all the doctors of 39 Covid hospitals in the district. He observed that cases are surfacing due to the use of substandard quality of water in humidifiers while supplying oxygen to patients. He told the hospital authorities to use distilled water. In Vijayapura, the first case of black fungus was reported at BLDE Hospital on Sunday. The doctors confirmed that the patient is stable. However, attendants of the patient are struggling to find Amphotericin.

Gram panchayat employee infected

Belagavi: A 28-year-old gram panchayat employee from Khemalapur village of Raibag taluk in Belagavi district has been infected with black fungus. Anand Kulali --- who works at Khemalapur gram panchayat --- tested positive for Covid-19 on May 7 and was admitted to Hukkeri taluk hospital in the district. He was later referred to a private hospital in Belagavi. As he was being treated for Covid, his face started to swell and he was referred to an ENT specialist. Anand was then admitted to a private hospital at Miraj in neighbouring Maharashtra and doctors told the relatives that he had to undergo a surgery. Anand's family, which is economically poor, had appealed to the authorities for help. When Deputy Chief Minister Laxman Savadi heard of Anand's condition, he helped in shifting him to Bengaluru from Miraj. Doctors, however, said that Anand's condition is critical. Deputy Commissioner Mahantesh Hiremath, however, said that there have been no cases of black fungus in the district.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

HEALTH Minister Dr K Sudhakar on Saturday said that it has been decided to start treatment for Mucormycosis or black fungus at Bowring Hospital from May 17. He said the treatment will be expanded to all medical colleges and district government hospitals.

He said that the fungal infection arises in Covid patients with less immunity, those treated with excessive steroids and are diabetic. It starts from the nose and spreads to the eyes and can lead to loss of vision or even death.

"Amphotericin B, the drug used to treat black fungus is in short supply. It has to be taken for seven weeks and will cost Rs 2-3 lakh per person. I will discuss with Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa regarding free treatment. We have requested the Union Government for 20,000 doses of this medicine," Sudhakar said, advising people not to take steroids on their own and only on doctor's advice.

He also requested doctors to not excessively prescribe steroids, especially for those with less immunity. He asked patients with other conditions such as Tuberculosis, HIV, and Cancer to be careful.

A committee comprising eye experts, endocrinologists, diabetologists, etc will be formed on Monday to decide on the treatment to be provided for black fungus.



The treatment for black fungus will begin at Bowring Hospital in Bengaluru from today and will be expanded to all districts shortly

12 PERSONS INFECTED IN KOLAR

Kolar: Twelve post-Covid patients, infected with black fungus, are being treated at RL Jalappa Hospital in Kolar, said Deputy Commissioner Dr Selvamani. All the patients are stable and responding to treatment, he added. A few of them have undergone surgery and their condition too is stable, he said. Sources said that majority of the patients who have been infected were on oxygen while being treated for Covid.

Meanwhile, Sudhakar said that while the positivity rate was declining in Bengaluru, it was increasing in other districts and in rural areas. "One of the reasons for this is reverse migration before the lockdown," he said.

Amphotericin B, the drug used to treat black fungus is in short supply. It has to be taken for seven weeks and will cost Rs 2-3 lakh per person. I will discuss with Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa regarding free treatment
Dr K Sudhakar, Health Minister

OXYGEN PLANT GETS GOING IN KGF HOSPITAL

V VELAYUDHAM @ Kolar

KARNATAKA'S first oxygen generating plant, set up at KGF General Hospital, was commissioned on Sunday morning, and is expected to be a boon to the region.

The plant has brought a sense of relief to the area as until now, 65 oxygen cylinders, which were refilled at a unit in Malur, were used at this hospital. Now, at least 100 patients are being treated directly from the plant.

After the Israeli oxygen plant arrived at KGF, three teams of experts from Bengaluru worked non-stop to set up the plant, supervised by Kolar Deputy Commissioner Selvamani.

The DC told *TNIE* that the Centre has sent two Israeli oxygen generating plants to Karnataka, which can generate 500 litres of oxygen per minute. One plant was allotted to Kolar district and another to Yadgir. He said the plant was ready for use late Saturday night, and the team was rechecking the flow of oxygen through the pipelines.

District Surgeon Dr Shiva Kumar said the new oxygen plant is a boon to the hospital, as patients can be administered oxygen without a break, and the hospital authorities don't need to get cylinders refilled and transported. There are no issues with the working of the oxygen plant, the doctor said.

Of the 65 cylinders in use at KGF Hospital, 35 have been filled and kept ready for emergency use, while the remaining 30 have been moved to other places, including Bangarpet.

AIR INDIA FLIES IN ZEOLITE TO PRODUCE O₂



Bengaluru: In yet another move that would help tide over the oxygen shortage in Karnataka, a total of 34,200 kg of zeolite, a key component in the production of oxygen, reached Bengaluru airport from Rome via two Air India cargo flights on Sunday.

According to an airport source, one flight carrying 35 drums of zeolite, landed at 6.45am, while the second, with 22 drums of the material, reached around 8am. They were cleared on priority by Bengaluru Customs, a highly-placed source said. The consignment will be transported to Tata Advanced Systems in Malur, he added. Three more such consignments are expected to arrive at KIA within the next two or three days, the source said. Oxygen production plants which adopt Pressure Swing Adsorption technology utilise zeolite as it serves as a molecular sieve and adsorbs nitrogen, in the process generating purified oxygen. A PTI report from New Delhi quoted Air India as saying, "DRDO is the charterer for the zeolite consignments." The report added that the national carrier was going to airlift zeolite mineral from multiple locations. ENS

FRESH CASES FALL, RECOVERIES SPEED UP

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

FOR the first time since mid-March, when the second wave started raging in the state, the number of active cases have shown a decline, even as Karnataka recorded its highest number of daily discharges that was almost 5,000 more than the fresh Covid cases reported on Sunday. Bengaluru recorded 8,344 cases, a sharp slide from 13,402 on Saturday, but testing is also said to be on the decline. The state saw a whopping 36,475 Covid-19 patients discharged as against 31,531 fresh cases reported --- also a first in the second wave. With this robust sign, the state's recovery rate recorded an improvement on the fifth consecutive day, standing at 71.77 per cent, as against 71.13 per cent on Saturday and 69.84 per cent on May 9. However, the state's recovery rate had witnessed its peak of 98.06 per cent on January 30, a month before the second wave surged.

The number of active cases which has been on a rapid increase since March 15, when it was just 8,860, is now 6,00,147, falling for the first time from 6,05,494 cases on Saturday. That said, Karnataka leads all other states in the number of active cases, with Maharashtra second at 4,68,109, and Kerala with 4,40,649 at third spot. The fresh deaths, however, showed a rise by again crossing the 400-mark to 403.

Invest on increasing number of medical staff, experts tell govt

BOSKY KHANNA @ Bengaluru

WITH Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa asking officials to gear up to face a possible Covid-19 third wave in the State, experts opine that the State Government should invest on strengthening medical staff.

Experts have suggested that the government should increase the number of medical and paramedical staff if it has to fight the third wave effectively. They have asked the government to dig out a document that a technical committee presented to the government during the first wave on the number of doctors, nurses, paramedical and other staff required to tackle the pandemic. The committee,

headed by former BMRC Managing Director Ajay Sethi, had prepared the report giving a break up of the medical staff required to fight the pandemic.

A committee member said that keeping in mind the rising cases, the committee had calculated the number of doctors, nurses and paramedics needed.

The panel had calculated that one doctor is needed for every 100 active cases and one nurse for every ten patients. In the ICU, for every two patients one nurse is needed and for every six patients one doctor is needed. But in reality, a doctor in the ICU oversees 10-15 patients, while one nurse handles over 20-30 patients.

Dr Prasanna HM, president, Private Hospitals and Nursing Homes Association (PHANA), Karnataka, said, "The government has not even ensured sufficient staff based on the National Accreditation Board for Hospitals and Healthcare guidelines. It is investing on ventilators, ICUs and oxygen concentrators, but not on hiring trained staff to operate these machines."

A health department official said the proposal was placed before the government to ask RGUHS to pool in the workforce and to train students in handling these machines. It has also been suggested to the government to train MBBS and other medical students on handling machines like ventilators so that they can be put to service immediately.

TO TIDE OVER CRISIS

Gadag cops turn saviour for migrants



Gadag SP Yatish N distributes groceries to a migrant family

RAGHOTTAM KOPPAR @ Gadag

GADAG Superintendent of Police Yatish N and his staff are lending a helping hand to migrants who are stuck in the district after the imposition of lockdown by giving them grocery and other essential items. His pictures of helping people

have gone viral on social media.

Many migrants come to the district during the summer months to attend annual fairs and to sell agricultural equipment and other items.

Most migrants were not aware of the recent lockdown and got stranded on the out-

skirts of Gadag town.

Yatish and other officials are planning to help all of them. Many organisations and individuals have also come forward to help them.

A family, which received grocery kits, said, "We were not aware of the lockdown this time. We sell agriculture products in villages. Now, we do not have any work and PDS cards. We were worried about our future as we lost our source of income. Luckily, we got food kits. Now, our children can at least eat."

Yatish told *The New Indian Express*, "The assistance is being carried out with the help of some donors and the department. We are making a list of people who are in need of help. The department will co-ordinate and ensure that maximum people get the benefits."

TOUGH TIMES

53 edu dept staffers die in Bidar, poll duty takes toll

RAMKRISHNA BADSESHI @ Bidar

A majority of teachers who took part in election-related duties recently have succumbed to Covid-19 in the district. Of the 53 education department staff who died of Covid in the district, a majority of them were deployed on election work. Bypolls to Basavakalyan assembly seat was held on April 17, followed by Bidar City Municipality polls on April 27.

Acting Deputy Director of Public Instructions T R Dodde told *TNIE*, "Of 1,500 employees of the department in the district, 200 employees, including DDPI Gannanna Swamy, tested positive for Covid and 53 employees succumbed to Covid in the past two months."

"We cannot say that all teachers who were deputed for poll work contracted the virus and all the teachers who died due to Covid were on election duty. It is true that most of them were on poll duty. In Basavakalyan taluk alone, 16 teachers died due to Covid. However, they were not posted on poll duty. Of the 53 employees who died, 46 are teacher and seven are non-teaching staff. Eighteen victims are from Bidar taluk, 16 from Basavakalyan taluk, and seven each from Bhalki and Aurad taluks and five employees of Humnabad taluk," he said.

In other districts of Kalyana Karnataka, the death rate of employees (mostly teachers) of the department is not high compared to Bidar district.

In Kalyana Karnataka, 147 employees of the Public Instructions Department, including 130 teachers, died due to Covid. The department has provided money for performing the final rites, sources said.

RAIN ABATES, BUT MISERY CONTINUES IN KERALA, 4,712 IN RELIEF CAMPS

Highest rainfall of 5 cm recorded in Kozhikode till 5.30pm; state opens control rooms in all districts

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@TPuram

AFTER two days of incessant rainfall triggered by Cyclone Tauktae, the showers abated in the state on Sunday. However, rough sea continued to batter the state's coastline, damaging several houses.

Though the cyclone has moved away from the Kerala region, the state will continue to witness moderate rainfall on Monday. The India Meteorological Department has sounded yellow alert for all districts, except Thiruvananthapuram, Palakkad and Wayanad, on Monday.

Meanwhile, several people were forced to take shelter in relief camps after the sea flooded and destroyed their homes. So far, 141 relief camps have been opened across the state, sheltering 4,712 people from 1,300 families.

As the squally weather prevailing in the Arabian Sea is set to continue till Tuesday, the ban enforced on fishing activities will be in effect till further notice. Meanwhile, the

northern parts of the state witnessed extreme rainfall till Sunday morning. However, the rain subsided later in the day.

A woman died when a coconut tree fell on her following strong winds in Koyilandy. The deceased is Kandal Mithal Yashoda, 71, of Arikkulam in Koyilandy. Till 8.30am on Sunday, Mahe recorded the highest rainfall of 24cm, followed by Vadakara (23 cm), Vythiri, 21 cm and Taliparamba and Thalassery (17cm each).

The highest rainfall in the day time (till 5.30pm) was recorded in Kozhikode (5cm).

The state has opened control rooms in all districts and made arrangements to shift people to camps in case of adverse climate.

Cyclone Tauktae is likely to intensify further during the next 24 hours and move north and northwards and reach Gujarat coast by Monday evening. It will then cross Gujarat coast between Porbandar and Mahuva (Bhavnagar district) early morning on Tuesday with wind speed reaching 135 km per hour.

20 relief centres set up in 7 K'taka dists



A house that was completely destroyed at Thonikadavu near Anchuthengu in Thiruvananthapuram, due to high tide on Sunday | BP DEEPU

CONTINUED FROM P1

THE Chief Secretary was told to keep a helicopter on standby if required for rescue operations. In all, 516 people had been evacuated till Sunday evening, of which 253 were shifted to relief camps. About 20 relief camps have been set up in the seven districts.

While total loss of animal lives, agricultural and horticultural crops is still being assessed, 216 houses have been counted as

damaged by State Government authorities. 491 poles have got uprooted and 27 transformers have been damaged. A compensation package for loss of lives, livestock and houses is expected to be announced under SDRF norms after the total damage is assessed.

Revenue Minister R Ashoka on Saturday had said that the cyclone effect is likely to last till May 18 and had warned fishermen not to venture into the sea till then.

Boat with 15 fishermen feared missing found

Kozhikode: The fishing boat 'Ajmeer Shah' which had reportedly gone missing with 15 fishermen after venturing into the sea on May 5 was found at the New Mangalore Port on Sunday. Bepore MLA designate P A Muhammed Riyas who received a communique from Coastal Police IG P Vijayan said the fishermen, 10 from Tamil Nadu and five from West Bengal, who were onboard the boat are safe. On May 5, two boats—Ajmeer Shah and Milad-3—belonging to a Bepore native had set sail from Bepore Port with 15 workers each. Milad-3 was forced to dock at the Goa port after the engine developed technical snags. It was the fishermen at Bepore who first alerted officials of the 'missing boat'. ENS

No injuries on YSRC MP's body, says medical board

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Vijayawada

THE medical board constituted by the Andhra Pradesh High Court to examine the injuries on the body of rebel YSRC MP K Raghu Rama Krishnam Raju of Narasapuram, has concluded that there were no new injuries on his body.

The report of the board stated that the MP is in good health. Even before the board submitted its report to the court, the MP was shifted to prison in Guntur. The HC directed the CID to shift Raju to Ramesh Hospital in Guntur.

The HC asked the board headed by the Superintendent of Guntur Government General Hospital, to check the veracity of the MP's allegation that he was beaten during the custody of CID.

Raju was arrested on Friday for his alleged hate speeches against certain communities and spreading disaffection against the government. The board's report was submitted to the HC by the district court. When the matter came up for hearing, the division bench of Justice C Praveen Kumar and Justice K Lalitha read out the report, which stated that there

were no injuries on the body of the MP and his health condition is good.

Raju's counsel B Adinarayana said the CID did not implement the court order to get the MP examined at Ramesh Hospital. The counsel further informed that a senior CID official met Raju when the latter was in judicial custody and it is against the rules.

He also informed the bench that there was a threat to the life of the MP in prison and urged the court to issue orders to shift him to Ramesh Hospital. The HC said the order of the CID court to shift Raju to Ramesh Hospital should be implemented.

Additional Advocate General P Sudhakar Reddy informed the court that the HC on Saturday evening issued an order constituting the Medical Board for examining the wounds on the MP's body.

The CID court gave its orders at 8:30 pm on Saturday directing that the MP should be shifted to Ramesh Hospital. The AAG said they informed the HC verdict to the CID court which said it would amend its order once it gets the order copy of the HC verdict.

EXPRESS READ

Second batch of Russian vax Sputnik V reaches Hyderabad

Hyderabad: The second consignment of Sputnik V Covid-19 vaccine, consisting of 60,000 doses, arrived in a special flight at Rajiv Gandhi International Airport here on Sunday. Earlier, the first consignment of 1.5 lakh doses had arrived in the country on May 1. Sputnik V has been approved by 66 countries. In comparison, AstraZeneca-Oxford's Covishield has got approval in 40 countries and Bharat Biotech's Covaxin in 9 countries. In India, Hyderabad-based pharma firm Dr Reddy's has partnered with the Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) - Russia's sovereign wealth fund responsible for marketing Sputnik V abroad - to import the vaccine. The first consignment of 1.5 lakh doses was approved for distribution by the Central Drugs Laboratory, Kasauli on May 13.

Remdesivir to be sold to pvt hospitals directly in Chennai

CHENNAI: Following warnings from health experts on overcrowding at the places that are designated for purchasing Remdesivir drug in Chennai, the State government, on Sunday, announced that the anti-viral drug will directly be given to hospitals from Tuesday. A new portal would be launched soon through which private hospitals will be allowed to purchase Remdesivir directly from the sales centres, the government said in a statement. The private hospitals will have to furnish all information related to the patients in the soon to be launched portal and should accordingly place requests for Remdesivir online.

Israel blast victim's funeral held in Idukki

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Idukki

THE funeral of Soumya Suresh, 30, who was killed in a mortar attack in Ashkelon city of Israel last Tuesday, was held at Nithya Sahaya Matha Church at Keerithodu in Idukki on Sunday afternoon.

The funeral prayers were led by Mar John Nellikunnel, bishop of Idukki Eparchy. The function was held adhering to Covid-19 protocol with only 20 persons attending, officials said. Jonathan Zadka, consul-general of the Israel's consulate in Bengaluru, came to Soumya's home at Keerithodu, a village in Idukki, to pay his last respects. In his short speech, Zadka said Soumya was an angel who was killed in the "terror attack".

He promised the Israel government's all support to Soumya's family, especially her nine-year-old son.

Idukki MP Dean Kuriakose, who was in Kochi to receive the body of Soumya on Saturday, was present at her home and later at the church.

Soumya worked as a caregiver attending to an elderly woman at a house in Ashkelon, a southern Israeli coastal city, bordering the Gaza Strip, which has come under massive fire from the hardline Palestinian group. At least 31 people were killed in the attack.

The rocket fell on the residence of Soumya, 31, in the city of Ashkelon while she was talking to her husband Santhosh, who is in Kerala, over a video call. Soumya, hailing from Keerithodu in the Idukki district, had been working as a housemaid in Israel for the last seven years.

Letter lists projects for which Karnataka needs to pay up

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

THE letter listed a break-up of various projects for which the State is yet to pay up its share: Bidar-Gulbarga new line: Rs 63.71 cr; Rayadurga-Tumukuru via Kalyanadurga line: Rs 67.51 cr; Munirabad-Raichur new line: Rs 107.89 cr; Kadur-Chikmagalur new line: Rs 82.03 cr; Hejjala to Chamarajanagar new line: Rs 0.38 cr; Shivamogga-Harihar new line: Rs 0.57 cr; Whitefield-Kolar new line: Rs 0.18 cr; Gadag-Wadi new line: Rs 38.28 cr; Kothur-Harihar new line: Rs 67.64 cr; Hassan-Bengaluru via Shravanabelagola new line: Rs 225.38 cr; and Ramanagaram-Mysuru doubling: Rs 193.45 crore.

A total of 606.21 hectares of land needs to be acquired by South Western Railway for three projects, for which the State had deposited Rs 80.63 cr - Hospet-Hubballi-Londa-Tinaighat-Vasco-da Gama doubling project, Rayanadurga-Tumukuru new line via Kalyanadurga, and Ginigeri-Raichur new line.

infected with Coronavirus, but no one came forward to cremate his body. Finally, Shabeer and his four friends took the responsibility of cremating his body.

Later, Shabeer and his friends noticed that bodies of several Covid-19 patients were lying at hospitals or outside houses as family members were too scared to come forward and cremate the bodies. That day, they decided to take the task into their hands. Today, the team has some 25-odd people including BTEch and degree students, auto drivers and masons, and so on.

The team has people from all religions who are united in their belief to serve the society in

times of crisis.

The team has been providing services to distraught families without charging a single penny. In fact, they have also been providing financial aid to poor families for conducting funerals. Speaking to The New Indian Express, Shabeer Pasha said, "We have not taken any donation or contribution from anyone till date. We have been doing it for free as a responsibility towards society. When we receive a call from any patient's family, we put on PPE kits and rush to the spot in our own vehicles. We take all possible precaution during the funeral so that none of the team members get infected."

CYNTHIA CHANDRAN @TPuram

THE Congress would select its next legislative party leader at a meeting of the newly elected MLAs which will be overseen by the two central party observers, Mallikarjun Kharge and V Vaithilingam, on Tuesday. Though the incumbent Ramesh Chennithala is trying all tricks up his sleeve to continue in office, the majority of the new legislators are keen on choosing 56-year-old V D Satheesan as his successor.

Kharge, Opposition Leader in the Rajya Sabha, and Vaithilingam, MP from Pudukcherry, will be reaching Thiruvananthapuram on

Tuesday morning to hold deliberations with the party's 21 elected members on their choice of the next CLP leader. Despite the murmurs within the party against Chennithala, he remains unfazed.

Chennithala's stand is that he had proved himself as the best Opposition leader the state has ever seen. But unfortunately, it did not help the UDF in garnering votes which, he feels, was not his fault as there were undercurrents in favour of the LDF which the Opposition could not gauge in advance.

The Congress high com-

mand is also keen to see a change of guard at the state party and CLP so that the beleaguered party workers smarting under the severe poll drubbing can be energised. "Unfortunately, Chennithala is not seeing it that way. He is confident of reviving the party and UDF in the Lok Sabha elections due in 2024. Chennithala has so far not confided to his loyalists that he is not in the race for the CLP leadership which reveals his keen desire to cling on to power," a senior newly elected MLA told The New Indian Express.



NO ONE IN SIGHT

The otherwise busy Eechangadu flyover at Pallavaram-Thoraipakkam Radial Road in Chennai wears a deserted look due to the complete lockdown on Sunday | ASHWIN PRASATH

CONGRESS NEW MLAs MEET TO PICK NEXT LEADER TOMORROW

Months after woman tests positive, gang attacks family

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Bengaluru

A 20-year-old nursing student and her father were allegedly assaulted when they questioned their neighbours, who were chiding them as one of the family members had tested positive for Covid-19.

The alleged incident took place in Lakshmipuram in Indiranagar on Friday evening.

Priyadarshini, a nursing student, in her complaint stated that her mother had tested positive for Covid-19 in September last year. Since then, three of her neighbours identified as Ram, Prabhu, and Arjun were allegedly chiding the family members saying they were "spreading coronavirus" in the area.

"On Friday, at around 5 pm, they were hurling filthy abuses looking at our house. When my father objected, they picked up a fight with him and assaulted him. They tried to attack him with a knife and I tried to stop them. But Ram injured my hand with the knife. The trio escaped after threatening us of dire consequences," she stated in the complaint.

The Indiranagar police have registered a case and are further investigating.



25 youth give Covid dead the honour they deserve

B SATYANARAYANA REDDY
@Khammam

AS many refuse to claim bodies of their relatives dying of Covid-19 in the district, 25 youths have taken it upon themselves to conduct the final rites for unclaimed bodies in Bhadradi-Kothagudem district.

This team of 25 members have given honourable send off to 62 persons from Kothagudem and neighbouring areas in last one year. Out of the 62 bodies for which they performed last rites, 10 were Christians, 15 were Muslims and the rest were Hindus. A person named Shaikh Shabeer Pasha started this novel



Picture for representation

initiative in last April when a local Praja Natya Mandali artiste M Komaraiah died after getting

ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ನಗರ, ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ಗ್ರಾಮಾಂತರ ಹಾಗೂ ರಾಮನಗರ ಜಿಲ್ಲಾ ಸರ್ಕಾರ ಹಾಲು ಉತ್ಪಾದಕರ ಸಂಘಗಳ ಒಕ್ಕೂಟ ನಿ., ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ಡೆರಿ ಪ್ರಾಂಗಣ: ಡಾ ಎಂ.ಪಿ. ಮರಣ್ಣ ರಸ್ತೆ, ಡಿ.ಆರ್.ಕಾಲೇಜ್ ಆಂಟಿ, ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು-560029	
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3 ಬಿಡ್ಡರ್ ಸಲ್ಲಿಸಲು ಕೊನೆಯ ದಿನಾಂಕ/ಸಮಯ	18.06.2021 ರಂದು ಸಂಜೆ 4.00 ಘಂಟೆಯವರೆಗೆ
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5 ವಾಣಿಜ್ಯ ಬಿಡ್ಡರ್ (ಭಾಗ-2) ತೆರೆಯುವ ದಿನಾಂಕ/ಸಮಯ	ದಿನಾಂಕ 22.06.2021 ರಂದು ಬೆಳಿಗ್ಗೆ 11.30 ಘಂಟೆಗೆ
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INDIAN EXPRESS IS NOT AN INDUSTRY. IT IS A MISSION.

— Rammath Goenka

SCARY DIMENSION OF VIRUS AS IT ADVANCES INTO RURAL INDIA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently shared his concern over the acceleration of Covid infection in rural India. The situation is acute because the rural healthcare infrastructure is generally pathetic and certainly in no shape to handle the pandemic at a time when its urban counterpart is still struggling to arrange oxygen and ICU beds to save lives. A hint of the scale of the rural crisis came from the bodies floating on the Ganga and those buried in shallow pits on the river's banks. Some estimates suggest at least 2,000 such bodies have been spotted along Uttar Pradesh's riverine districts. Whether or not those deaths are Covid-related and have been accounted for is a mystery. Just to understand the magnitude of the challenge, as many as 70% of India lives in villages. The State Bank of India's economy bulletin Ecowrap on May 7 said the share of rural districts in new cases increased to 45.5% in April and 48.5% in May as compared to 36.8% in March.

The first wave created a false sense of security as home-bound migrants didn't seem to carry the infection, and the Bihar election in October-November was Covid-free though all norms were flouted. That added to the general overconfidence in rural India on their robust immunity. Lakhs of Punjab farmers had massed at Delhi's gates protesting against the farm reform laws during the whole of winter, nonchalantly ignoring advisories that they could get infected. The virus struck as winter waned and has now ravaged the whole of Punjab.

Many villagers seem to be living in denial even if they develop symptoms, indicating an awareness deficit. To the urban mind, such awareness drives on the phone may be 'irritating', as the Delhi High Court sniped in a different context, but they ought to be pursued in the local dialect relentlessly in rural areas. Training and equipping panchayati raj institutions with materials like pulse oximeter and digital thermometer, collating basic data from each village daily, and arranging for isolation and doctor consultation for positive cases, is the bare minimum the state could do to protect rural lives. Prodding villagers to shed vaccine hesitancy is paramount if we are to successfully contain the virus.

HIRING MED STUDENTS TO BATTLE COVID

In a move aimed at reducing the pressure on the overburdened medical fraternity, the Chennai Corporation has recruited a group of final-year MBBS students as trainee medical officers for Covid duty in Tamil Nadu. This comes a fortnight after the Centre's review meeting that decided to incentivise final-year medical and nursing students to help out.

These students will be tele-counselling and making data entries, but may also be roped in for hospital duty on a ₹40,000 monthly stipend. They will have to make calls to home quarantined patients to enquire about their SPO₂ levels, comorbidities, etc., ensure food distribution and garbage collection in their houses, and co-ordinate with hospital facilities for more serious cases. Gujarat, Maharashtra, Haryana and Delhi have already taken this step. Gujarat was the first, having made it compulsory in July last year for final years to report for pandemic duty on a stipend of ₹500 per day. It threatened to debar them from examinations and invoked Section 188 of the IPC and the Disaster Management Act, 2005, if they did not report for work. A group of students had even moved court, citing exposure to the disease, but it was turned down, stating the medical profession warrants students "to step in for service during such critical times". Internationally, too, the US and UK have roped in final-year students into the healthcare system. Italy deployed more than 10,000 students to general practitioner clinics and senior citizens' institutes to help experienced doctors focus on hospital duty. But this has opened up a debate on whether it is right to get students into this risky duty. Questions have been raised about whether they would be provided with insurance cover. The Maharashtra government is the first to announce a ₹50 lakh insurance cover, apart from the ₹30,000 remuneration and free accommodation for them.

According to ethics in the medical profession, *primum non nocere* ("do no harm" in Latin) means a doctor has to be careful about not taking any step that may worsen the patient's condition. The TN government must keep that in mind while tweaking its policy to induct students into the Covid fray.



Being an observer in Jerusalem means gauging two opposing forces: one pulling the city apart, and the glue keeping it together. The former gets plenty of attention, and the latter almost none, but both are always in play

Matti Friedman

One is tempted to dive into the recent riots in Jerusalem and the sudden reawakening in Gaza, but the evolving situation between Iran and Israel bears greater strategic significance

EYES ON THE IRAN-ISRAEL STANDOFF

LT GEN SYED ATA HASNAIN (RETD)



Former Commander, Srinagar-based 15 Corps. Now Chancellor, Central University of Kashmir

During the current pandemic, one region that was uncharacteristically quiet for some time was the Middle East. It has come back to life just when it was being assessed that the US is working overtime to shift the centre of gravity of its international security concerns to the Indo Pacific. One is tempted to immediately dive into the recent riots in Jerusalem and the sudden reawakening in Gaza, but what should concern most observers is the evolving situation between Iran and Israel, which probably bears greater strategic significance in the Middle East with unpredictable consequences. The Gaza tension in many ways is also connected to the Iran-Israel standoff. Reputed strategic affairs magazines are predicting a war-like situation between the two nations early in the near future.

Under the Trump administration, Israel had everything going for it. The emergence of the US-Israel-Saudi triangle had secured Israeli interests even more than in the Cold War period when it had unequivocal US support. Although US strategic interests were assessed to be diluting when it came to the core concern of energy (the shale gas revolution being responsible), America was in no mood to concede space to Russia in Iraq and Syria and did not wish to see a resurgence of the Islamic State (IS) terror group. Most of all, Donald Trump did not wish to allow Iran any leeway in enhancing its

strategic capability; this essentially meant placing limits on Iran's potential nuclear weapon capability and ability to launch proxies at will to destabilise any part of the Middle East and secure its interests. The assassination of the Iranian IRGC Commander General Qasem Soleimani by the US in December 2019 displayed the ends that it could go to secure its interests and that of its allies. In May 2018, Trump had withdrawn the US from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) of July 2015 that had been signed by the Big Powers with Tehran, under which the first signals of the mainstreaming of Iran had begun and a semblance of control over its nuclear weapon ambitions had been established.

The end of the Trump era and the coming of the Biden administration promised a reversal and a return to the JCPOA, which Iran is now hard bargaining at Vienna in talks with the US. For Israel, the potential of Iran's nuclear weaponisation has always posed an existential threat to the Jewish state. The Iran-Israel enmity has had a chequered and complex past with breakdown in relations since the Revolution in 1979; although Israel assisted Iran with weaponry during the Iran-Iraq war of the Eighties. After 1990, Iran adopted a more hardline stance as it pushed for assuming a greater leadership role in the Islamic world with enhanced support to the Palestinian

cause. This gave it a higher moral authority in the light of dwindling Arab support that paid only lip service to the Palestinians. In the eighties, Iran built a system of proxies on Israel's Lebanon border through the Shia Hezbollah. Financing, training and arming led to Hezbollah eventually becoming one of the chief adversaries of Israel, along with Hamas in the Gaza area that too emerged as an Iranian proxy. In 2003, a clandestine Iranian nuclear weapons programme was discovered. The combination of potential nuclear weapon capability and ability to proliferate proxies at will would have given Iran an out-of-proportion power in the Middle East. As a potential nuclear weapon state itself, Israel shunned nuclear weapons and thus threw the moral mantle of responsibility on the Big Powers. Iran became an international pariah with a range of sanctions imposed on it until the JCPOA was finally signed. It however became redundant with the US withdrawing from the agree-



Rising tensions in the Middle East directly related to Israel's security would place a pause on US-Iran negotiations too. Is this the intent of some of the events whose timing at this moment appears inexplicable?

ment in 2018. The spectre of achievement of an earlier date for development of nuclear fuel capability by Iran started to look real, with all its consequences.

Israel has never been convinced by the international community's negotiations with Iran. It therefore retains its strategic independence to deal with the threat as it perceives correct. Clandestine means to neutralise Iran's progress have been launched from time to time. Spies deployed months in advance to plant explosives inside an Iranian nuclear plant, a lethal cyber-attack to corrupt computers that control centrifuges spinning uranium, and automatic fire on a leading nuclear scientist by remotely activating a machine gun in Tehran have all been tried out. Delay yes, but stopping the nuclear programme has not been achieved and this worries Israel. Possession of nuclear weapons capability by Iran in future will create asymmetry although the effect of this scenario will be minimal because of virtual US security guarantee for Israel. Yet living with nuclear weapons in the possession of a sworn adversary in the neighbourhood that threatens its destruction is not the least bit comfortable for Israel. Can Israel therefore do anything within its own capability to confront Iran and execute a regime change? Without common borders between the two countries, it is essentially airpower, missileery and

proxies that will make up the arsenal, the latter only in the possession of Iran. Israel cannot expect Arab support in any such venture except clandestinely Israeli security officials often mention the presence of a very large arsenal of Iranian missiles in Lebanon and Syria, almost four times more than the capability of Israel's iron dome anti-missile system to handle. It also faces the challenge of proxies on ground and Hezbollah in the north undertaking conventional operations as against sub-conventional ones. Israel's famous proactivity, as displayed in the Six Day War in 1967 when it knocked out the Egyptian Air Force on the ground in one swoop, may not easily be repeated against Iran unless there is enough provocation for the US to be involved directly. The latter situation does not fit into the matrix of the international order today.

Iran should assess no major advantage from upping the ante at this stage when its move out of sanctions is under negotiation by a more reasonable US leadership. However, rising tensions in the Middle East directly related to Israel's security would place a pause on US-Iran negotiations too. Is this the intent of some of the events whose timing at this moment appears inexplicable? The pull of the Middle East has reappeared, it seems, to keep the US centred here once again.

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ARE RECORD FDI INFLOWS A CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION?

BISWAJIT DHAR

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Amid the dismal economic numbers triggered by the slowdown of the economy followed by the Covid pandemic, one set has stood out as the bright spot: the data on inflows of foreign direct investment (FDI) into India. During the first nine months of the financial year 2020-21, total FDI inflows were more than \$67.5 billion, over \$12 billion or 22% higher than the corresponding period in 2019-20. This implies that the inflows during the previous financial year would exceed the record level of inflows registered in 2019-20, which was \$74.9 billion. Equity inflows have contributed to the spurt in FDI inflows, increasing to nearly \$51.5 billion during April-December 2020-21, from \$37.8 billion during the corresponding period in the 2019-20 fiscal. Thus, equity inflows had increased by over 36%.

Coming as they did during one of the most crippling downturns ever to have been experienced by the global economy, these numbers look extremely encouraging.

In our view, two logical questions need to be asked to understand the significance of these inflows. First, to what extent can these FDI inflows contribute to the revival of the Indian economy by creating productive capacities? Secondly, would these inflows support the flagship programme of the government, the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, announced in the wake of the pandemic for the turnaround of the manufacturing sector? The government has recently unveiled detailed company-wise data on FDI inflows for the third quarter of 2020-21, which provide the answers to these questions.

Financial year 2020-21 was especially important as it saw Reliance Industries' stock sales to foreign investors. While Covid drowned some of the headlines of its "strategic partnerships" with some major foreign companies, available data helps us put Reliance's deals in the context of the overall FDI inflows into India.

Between April and December

2020-21, the Reliance Group sold equity shares in seven companies to foreign investors, which were worth nearly \$28 billion. Thus, of the total equity capital invested by foreign companies in India during this period, over 54% was accounted for by stock sales by the Reliance Group. More than \$20 billion of promoter's shares in Jio Platforms, currently having the largest wireless subscriber base in India, were sold to 14 foreign investors, including Facebook, Google, KKR & Co. Inc, and Qualcomm. These "investments" by the foreign companies involved a mere transfer of shares without creating productive assets in the country, or, in other words, contributing to the revival of the economy.

In April 2020, Reliance group



Two logical questions need to be asked to understand their significance. First, to what extent can these FDI inflows contribute to the revival of the Indian economy by creating productive capacities? Secondly, would these inflows support the flagship programme of the government, the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan?

decided to sell 9.9% of its stake, worth over \$5.8 billion, in the Jio Platform to Facebook, one of its competitors in the digital business. The deal offered two significant benefits to the foreign partner: one, to achieve substantial expansion of its social media reach by piggy-backing on Jio Platforms and two, giving Facebook more than a sniff in India's rapidly expanding e-commerce business through Jio Mart. Following the Facebook deal, Reliance announced its partnership with Google for building an Android operating system in July 2020. Four months later, and after the Competition Commission of India had given its green signal, Reliance sold \$4.5 billion of its stock in Jio Platforms or a 7.7% stake in the company.

Why is Facebook's shareholding pegged at 9.9%? This could be because the International Monetary Fund (and also the Reserve Bank of India) states that if a foreign investor holds 10% or more of voting shares in a company, he "exercises a significant degree of influence on its management". Therefore, Jio Platforms remains "Indian controlled", even though two major foreign companies now own nearly 18% of its shares.

Looking beyond the Reliance deals, we need to ask whether the patterns of FDI inflows during

April to December 2020-21 are in sync with the development priorities set by the Government of India. In this regard, the major focus should be on the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, anchored on the revival of the manufacturing sector. According to the government, FDI is one of the critical elements for implementing this programme.

Data on FDI inflows shows that contrary to the government's expectations of larger magnitude of inflows into the manufacturing sector, this sector received just 13% of the total. The services sector attracted nearly 80% of the total inflows, with information technology enabled services (ITES) being the largest component, accounting for over 47% of them. This is hardly surprising given that the RBI has classified the activities of Jio Platforms as "other information technology and computer service activities". Other than services, wholesale and retail trade were the two prominent sectors.

It is quite clear that FDI inflows during April-December 2020-21 were not in consonance with the development priorities of the government. The question that must then be asked is the following: Are these record levels of FDI inflows a cause for celebration?

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MAIL BAG

WRITE TO: letters@newindianexpress.com

Welcome advice

This is with reference to Covid +ve. Consult doc. Don't panic & rush for O₂, ICU (May 16). The report has given a clear picture of what to do in the current situation along with advice from senior doctors. People need not panic and the suggestions given in the article can be followed by all.

M Sampath Kumar, Erode

Second dose confusion

When should the second dose vaccination of Covishield be taken? Confusion is the order of the day. Based on the UK experience, the Centre increased the gap from the first dose to 12-16 weeks. Now the latest is that the UK itself has reduced the gap to eight

weeks! V K Paul, member (health) Niti Aayog, has painstakingly explained that a gap of 12 weeks reduces the risk of infection by 60-85%, and that the Centre's decision was not due to vaccine shortage (Longer vax gap based on evidence: Centre, May 16). Has that theory lost validity now? Is the whole world groping in the dark?

P Mangalachandran, Kannur

Time to wake up

I agree with the article. Act like a leader, axe sycophants & saboteurs (May 16). The author has definitely highlighted the inner voice of most of the prime minister's supporters. We never expected this from a leader that we elected for our future. It is

time to wake up and do the needful at the earliest.

N Purushothama Sharma, Kasargod

Reform our bureaucracy

It is high time that the PM broke his silence, at least for the sake of stopping the fair-weather bureaucrats and ladder climbers. By failing to reform the bureaucracy as promised during the 2014 elections, this government has not only denied its own image, but also put the nation in dire straits.

Shravan V, email

Matter of relief

The Centre's notification that the second wave is fading in many states is a sign of relief to the public (Second

wave weakening, situation stable: Centre, May, 16). However, there should not be any complacency and laxity in policies pertaining to vaccine coverage for all.

K Balakrishnan, Madurai

Realise unity in diversity

This is with reference to Dravidian stock, Surya vs Annadurai (May 16). It is said that BJP has no leader of the calibre of the late Tamil Nadu CM to train young upcoming leaders like Tejasvi Surya. The RSS, which is training future leaders, needs to broaden its syllabus to make them understand that India would always be strong as long as one realises the importance of unity in diversity.

N Nagarajan, Secunderabad

Quacks in rural areas

In the absence of qualified doctors and proper medical facilities in rural India, people in villages are forced to visit quacks for Covid treatment. Since the pandemic has spread to rural areas too and good facilities in cities are far off, people are falling into this trap. The government should intervene and protect the villagers.

Ram Saran Singh, Bengaluru

Black fungus disease

The black fungus disease has been notified by the Haryana government. Does this alone serve any purpose? Experts have said overdose of medicine, especially steroids, is the root cause.

Deepak Singhal, Noida



Yashwant Sinha @YashwantSinha
The best way to control Covid is to do what BJP
govts are doing at Centre and in states, suppress
the figures. UP will get the first prize in this



Kapil Sibal @KapilSibal
Arresting daily wages, printers for anti-Modi posts.
Why don't you arrest those responsible for loss
of lives because of gov't's mishandling of this crisis?



Piyush Goyal @PiyushGoyal
Despite Covid-19 challenges, railways achieved a
major milestone with completion of 800m
tunnelling in East-West Kolkata Metro Corridor

Centre issues fresh guidelines as virus spreads to rural, tribal areas

Advises 30-bed Covid Centre for asymptomatic cases, training for CHOs in antigen testing

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

@ New Delhi

EXPRESSING concern over the surge in Covid cases in rural and tribal areas, the Union Health Ministry on Sunday issued a detailed guideline on pandemic containment and management in these areas. It has suggested surveillance, screening, home and community-based isolation and planning for health infrastructure for managing the infections at rural level.

It advised that peri-urban and rural areas plan a minimum 30-bedded Covid Care Centre for asymptomatic cases with comorbidities or mild cases where home isolation is not feasible. Provision of Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) kits should be made at all public health facilities including sub-centres or Health and Wellness Centres and Primary Health Centres, the Union Health Ministry said.

According to the ministry, in every village, active surveillance should be done for influenza-like illness/severe acute respiratory infections periodically by ASHA workers with



Relatives carry the body of a Covid victim as they walk past other bodies buried in the sand near the banks of river Ganga in Prayagraj on Sunday | PTI

help of Village Health Sanitation and Nutrition Committee (VHSNC).

Symptomatic cases, it says, can be triaged at village level by teleconsultation with community health officer (CHO), and cases with comorbidity/low oxygen saturation should

be sent to higher centres.

"Every sub-centre should run an ILI/SARI (illness/severe acute respiratory infections) OPD for dedicated time slots/days," it said.

The ministry also advised that identified suspected Covid cases should be tested either

through rapid antigen testing or by referral of samples to nearest testing laboratory, in accordance with ICMR guidelines.

The ministry said that CHOs should be trained in performing rapid antigen testing. Provision for test kits should be made at all public health facilities including sub-centres/health and wellness centres and primary health centres (PHCs). "Those asymptomatic but having history of high-risk exposure to Covid patients (exposure of more than 15 minutes without a mask within 6-feet distance) should be advised quarantine and tested as per ICMR protocol," the report says.

Depending upon the intensity of surge and number of cases, as far as feasible, contact tracing should be done as per Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme's (IDSP's) guidelines, it stated.

"Nearly 80-85% cases are asymptomatic/mildly symptomatic. These patients do not require hospitalisation and may be managed at home or in Covid care isolation facilities," the SOP stated.

U'KHAND

Worry as rise in viral infection among children

VINEET UPADHYAY @Dehradun

REELING under the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic, the hill state of Uttarakhand is also registering an alarming rise in the viral infection among children.

Medical experts have warned that if urgent steps are not taken to prevent the spread of in children, the situation will deteriorate further.

Dr Partap Rawat, a Dehradun-based paediatrician said, "The trend is worrisome and can cause serious problems. Though 95 per cent children remain asymptomatic, things can get out of hand if this continues."

Till April 1, 2021 a total of 2,134 children in the age group of 0-9 years had been infected while as many as 2,935 in the same age group got infected between April 2 and May 14.

Data shared by the state health department also revealed that infections have been rising significantly since the beginning of April.

Between April 1 and 15 as many as 264 children got infected while the numbers increased to 1,053 in the second fortnight of April. The situation further worsened when 1,618 children were reported to have contracted the infection between May 1 and 14.

The data also revealed that a total of 21,857 children in the state in the age group of 10-19 years have been infected with the virus till date.

Rahul leads 'arrest me too' campaign as cops detain people over critical poster

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

CONGRESS leader Rahul Gandhi, along with his colleagues and leaders of other parties, on Sunday hit out at the Centre over reports of several people being arrested in Delhi for allegedly putting up posters critical of the government's handling of the Covid crisis.

Led by Rahul Gandhi, Congress leaders replaced their profile pictures on Twitter with the poster asking why Covid vaccines were sent abroad. The principal opposi-

tion party said tough questions will be asked to the prime minister if people don't get vaccines, medicines and oxygen.

"Arrest me too," Rahul tweeted along with an image of the poster which read "Modi ji, why did you send vaccines meant for our children, abroad?"

At least 17 people have been arrested by the Delhi Police over the posters that had appeared in the national capital criticising PM Modi's handling of the pandemic.

The Trinamool and the CPM,

too, voiced their opposition to the arrests.

"Busy with election rallies & building the Central Vista, Modi gov't didn't have time to plan for vaccines, but has time to arrest the poor asking," the CPM tweeted, repeating the line: "Why did you send our children's vaccines abroad?"

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh dared the PM and home minister to arrest him, saying he was putting up such posters on his compound wall. "Putting up critical posters against PM is now a crime? Is India run by the Modi Penal Code now?" he asked.



Police patrol in a closed market during the COVID-induced curfew in Shimla | PTI

Except Delhi, lockdown didn't give quick results

PUSHKAR BANAKAR @ New Delhi

AN analysis of the partial or full lockdowns imposed to combat the Covid second wave by various states since last month shows that apart from Delhi, most states have not seen a progressive reduction of fresh cases in the initial weeks despite the curbs. The graph began tapering only after May 9 (see table on P7).

For instance, while Maharashtra had around 60,000 daily new cases from April 15 to 26, which dropped to 48,700 on April 27, the count subsequently climbed to the 55,000-60,000 range. It's only after May 9 that there has been a progressive reduction of cases.

Maharashtra health minister Rajesh Tope said the lockdown helped bring down positive cases from the peak of 69,000 per day to below 40,000. "People should follow the lockdown re-

strictions strictly because it helps break the virus chain and reduce the burden on hospitals. However, in a rural area, positive cases are still rising. Self-discipline is very important to defeat the virus," he said.

Tope added that the state needed more restrictions to contain the virus. He was hopeful that by the end of May, the situation in Maharashtra will be much better. The positivity rate in the state also witnessed a decline from around 26% on April 15 to 16% on May 14.

Dr D C S Reddy, former head of the department at the Institute of Medical Sciences at Banaras Hindu University, said to accurately analyse the data, a seven-day moving average is a better parameter as the number of cases tested and confirmed on a daily basis depends on various other factors and hence

there are fluctuations in numbers. "In terms of lockdown, it was taken to ensure that transmission is slowed down both intra-state and inter-state. Also, to get a better picture of the decline, we need to wait a little longer. The rate of decline is slow in the initial phases but speeds up with time. So, we will get a clearer picture in the coming weeks," he said.

Delhi, on the other hand, saw a progressive decline in the case count and the positivity rate. While the number of cases hovered in the 20,000-25,000 range till May 2, it fell to just over 8,500 on May 14.

Positivity rates also took a sharp dive from 16% on April 19 to 12.2% on May 14.

In Haryana, the number of cases since the imposition of the lockdown on May 2 has been hovering around 13,000-15,000 per day with the state recording

its lowest per day tally since the imposition of the restrictions on May 14 with just over 10,600 cases. The positivity rate also saw a dip from around 26.5% to 16%. Amit Arya, media adviser to Haryana Chief Minister M L Khattar, said: "After the lockdown was imposed, cases have come down. From 16,000 cases a day, the number is around 10,000 now. Also there is more availability of beds as more Covid care centres have been set up and a few more will be inaugurated by Chief Minister Khattar on Sunday. Besides, the availability of oxygen in the state is much better," he said. In states like Madhya Pradesh and Punjab, where the lockdown was partial or phased, the fall in the number of cases has not been as steep. For instance, MP recorded just under 5,000 cases on April 9, when lockdown was imposed in some parts.

The tally gradually grew to

around 23,000 on May 9, after which there has been a steady drop with the state witnessing just over 15,600 cases on May 14. The positivity rate has seen a drop from almost 25% on April 20 to just under 12% on May 14. West Bengal, which saw an eight-phase state elections, imposed partial restrictions on April 30. Its per day cases have been on the rise since then from around 17,000 a day on April 30 to over 20,000 on May 14. However, the positivity rate has seen a slight dip from over 32% on April 30 to just under 30% on May 14. Similar trends were noticed in states like Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Odisha, which imposed partial lockdowns on April 27, April 24 and May 5, respectively.

Despite the drop in the number of cases and positivity rates in the states, the number of deaths have been on the rise in almost all the states since the complete or partial lockdowns kicked in.

ORPHANS

After TNIE series, Raj govt lends help to kids

RAJESH ASNANI @ Jaipur

AS Covid-19 devastates countless families in the country, the plight of children who have lost both parents to the disease has been particularly heart-wrenching. *The New Indian Express* has been reflecting many of these stories and now the Rajasthan government has come forward to help these children who are facing a harsh future.

The state Health Minister Dr Raghu Sharma has instructed district collectors, principals of medical colleges and health officers to take initiatives to ensure the well-being of these children. The health department has asked the chief medical officer of each district to take help of doctors and medical institutions in this regard.

Additional Chief Secretary of the Department, Akhil Arora informed that nominated doctors in medical institutions will immediately communicate about the orphaned children to child helpline number 1098 or the officials concerned.

There are reports that children who have become orphans due to Covid are spread across many districts. Many of the parents died in hospitals. Number of deaths in rural areas has also increased. According to officials, 40 per cent cases and deaths are coming from villages and identifying orphaned children has become a challenge.

In a series of such painful stories covered by *TNIE*, three are from Rajasthan. This included two sisters from Kota, Urvi (12) and Krati (5), who lost their parents in span of two days. Among the countless orphans of Covid-19 are Supriya (16) and Bindiya (13) who lost their father and mother in a gap of just three days last month. In another incident, Poorvi and Riya had lost their parents Shyam and Mahima Maheshwari.

Sangeeta Beniwal, the chairperson of State Child Rights Commission, said, "This is a terrible tragedy. We will try our best to help these children. I will personally ensure that they are linked to the 'Palanhaar Yojna' under which we give ₹1,000 a month for all orphans. The CM had also announced 'Panna Dhay' in the state budget this year to help the children in need. I will also recommend this case for special assistance from the CM Relief Fund."

EXPRESS READ

110 doctors join armed forces

New Delhi: Even as the Centre has decided to defer the retirement of military doctors for seven months, 110 newly commissioned doctors joined duty on May 14. The Centre has already started the process to recruit 400 former army medical officers for a period of 11 months to battle the Covid crisis.

'Covaxin effective against strains'

New Delhi: Bharat Biotech on Sunday said its 'Covaxin' has been found to be effective against coronavirus strains found in India and the UK. Citing a study published in a reputed journal, the vaccine major noted that Covaxin produced neutralising titres against all key emerging variants tested.

Maha Cong leader succumbs to virus

Mumbai: Senior Congress leader and Rajya Sabha MP Rajeev Satav succumbed to secondary pneumonia on Sunday in Pune. He is survived by his wife and two children. The 47-year-old Satav was close to Rahul Gandhi. Satav was admitted to hospital on April 23 with severe Covid pneumonia.

INDIA'S COVID TRACKER

36,18,458

ACTIVE CASES

14.66%

of total cases remain active

2,07,95,335

RECOVERIES

84.25%

recovery rate

1.09% CASE FATALITY RATE



31,48,50,143

SAMPLES TESTED SO FAR

18,32,950

SAMPLES TESTED ON SATURDAY

Bengal saw 25X surge in daily cases between 1st and 8th poll phases

PRANAB MONDAL @ Kolkata

WITH the lockdown to contain a surging Covid-19 cases in West Bengal starting on Sunday, officials in the state's health department warned the government to strictly impose the restrictions, saying the situation would go out of control otherwise.

The state has seen a steep surge in Covid-19 cases, blamed on the political gatherings during the course of the recently-concluded eight-phase Assembly elections in the state.

During the one month it took to hold the elections, which began on March 27 and concluded on April 29, the state witnessed an unprecedented 25 times surge in daily Covid-19 positive cases.

On February 26, the day the Election Commission announced the election schedule, about 199 people had tested positive. A month later, on March 27, when the first-phase of the election was held, as many as 646 daily cases were recorded. By the time the fifth phase was held on April 10, the number of daily cases had grown more than ten-fold to 6,910. The chief minister then requested the ECI to conduct the last three phases of the election in one go. But, the poll panel had rejected her request.

On the day the last phase of the polls was held on April 29,

THE STEADY RISE		
Date	Event	Cases in 24 hours
Feb 26	Announcement of election dates	199
March 27	First phase	646
April 1	Second phase	1,274
April 6	Third phase	1,961
April 10	Fourth phase	3,648
April 17	Fifth phase	6,910
April 22	Sixth phase	10,784
April 26	Seventh phase	15,889
April 29	Eighth phase	17,207
May 2	Election results	17,512
May 5	Partial lockdown	17,639
May 15	Stringent lockdown	19,511

the state recorded a whopping 17,207 new cases in 24 hours.

On May 15, the eve of lockdown, a total of 19,511 people tested positive.

On the first-day of the lockdown in the state, Kolkata police arrested 158 persons for not wearing masks, four for spitting in public. The police also impounded 59 vehicles and arrested 23 for flouting restrictions.

The Centre has asked the state government to make use of the services of the Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA) to conduct door-to-door survey in rural areas of the state.

The Centre has also asked West Bengal to reach out to the people in villages and tests their samples as much as possible.



People arrive at the Howrah railway station on Sunday to leave for their native places, as West Bengal began a two-week lockdown | BIBHASH LOOH

MAN ALIVE, BUT HOSP ISSUES DEATH CERTIFICATE

In a major goof-up by the West Bengal health department, the family of a man, who was under treatment for Covid-19, was handed his death certificate even though he was alive. "All our family members broke down. We went to the mortuary but the body was not there. We then went to the rear portion of the hospital and looked through a window, we saw my brother sitting on the bed," said the elder brother of the patient.

EXPRESS READ

Free Wi-fi now at 6K railway stations

New Delhi: The railways has enabled free Wi-Fi at its 6000th station as the facility went live at Hazaribagh town of Jharkhand on Saturday, the national transporter said. The railways provided Wi-Fi facility first at the Mumbai Railway station in 2016, reaching its 5000th station, at Midanpore in West Bengal. On May 15, Jarapada station in Angul District of Odisha was also provided with Wi-Fi facility, it said on Sunday. "This will bridge the digital divide between the rural and urban citizens thereby increasing the digital footprint in the rural villages and also enhance the user experience," the railways said. "Wi-Fi facility is being provided by railways at 6,000 stations now," it added.



Popular leopard of Van Vihar National Park dies

Sheru, the 16-year-old popular male leopard of Bhopal's Van Vihar National Park died after a period of prolonged illness on Friday. According to the Park's director Ajay Kumar Yadav, owing to the illness, Sheru was shifted from the display area to the leopard rescue centre. Sheru was brought to Van Vihar National Park from Maharashtra's Tadoba National Park seven years ago. After Sheru's demise, the Van Vihar National Park in Bhopal is now left with only ten leopards.

Maharashtra ready for Tauktae, says Uddhav

Govt has taken necessary steps to ensure oxygen supply to Covid hospitals will not be disrupted, the CM said

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Mumbai

MAHARASHTRA Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Sunday informed the Union Home Minister Amit Shah that people in the state's coastal areas have been warned about the approaching Cyclone Tauktae, and the state government has taken steps to ensure that electricity and oxygen supply to hospitals in the coastal areas will not be disrupted.

"We are already prepared for this cyclone. The state government has taken various measures to avert the damage. We have made a backup electricity supply plan, particularly for hospitals treating Covid-19 patients," the CM said.

To ensure that hospitals in low-lying areas do not get flooded, officials have been directed to make necessary arrangements to drain out excess rainwater. Also, patients have been shifted out of some of the Covid centers that are in vulnerable areas.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation has suspended vaccinations on Monday due to



Fishing boats anchored due to cyclone Tauktae alert at Mora Jetty Uran in Navi Mumbai on Sunday | PTI

the cyclone.

CM Uddhav said the cyclone has the potential to disrupt the oxygen supply chain. Therefore the government has informed oxygen manufacturers and suppliers to be ready to tackle any situations and ensure the smooth supply of oxygen to hospitals. Uddhav has asked the local authorities to help facilitate the smooth supply of oxygen to hospitals in the coastal areas.

The chief minister said enough police forces have been deployed at various places to ensure that the oxygen supply to hospitals are not disrupted by the cyclone. The war room at the Mantralaya has also been put on alert to help people who are in need. Thackeray said measures have been taken to safeguard the oxygen manufacturing plants located in the coastal areas that are likely to bear the brunt of the cyclone.

Strict crackdown on pro-Palestine protests in Kashmir, 22 arrested so far

FAYAZ WANI @ Srinagar

THE police in Kashmir have sent a clear message that pro-Palestine protests will not be tolerated in the Valley by arresting 22 people in the last few days.

The Israeli attack on Gaza, in response to rocket firing by Hamas militants, has angered many in the Kashmir Valley.

On Thursday, youths staged two protests in Srinagar. In one of them at Padshahi Bagh, a graffiti artist Mudasar Gul put up a pro-Palestine graffiti on a bridge that depicts a woman wearing a scarf made of Palestinian flag with tears trickling down from her eye. The graffiti had the message, "We are Palestine" to express solidarity with the Palestinians.

The next day police launched a crackdown on those who participated in the two protests. As many as 21 people, including the graffiti artist Mudasar Gul, were detained.

"Two protests were held in Srinagar Friday on Palestine

issue. They were identified on the basis of videography done during the protests," the police said. In south Kashmir's Shopian district, the police arrested cleric Sarjan Barkati for holding a special prayer for Palestinians during Eid.

These arrests send a clear message that police won't be allowing any kind of dissent or protests in Valley. A police spokesman said the police is keeping a close watch on those

who are attempting to leverage the situation in Palestine to disturb public peace in Kashmir. "We won't allow cynical encashment of the public anger to trigger violence in Kashmir's streets," he said.

Press bodies rap attack on Gaza building

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

CONDEMNING the Israeli airstrike on a building in Gaza that houses offices of international media outlets, some of India's leading press associations on Sunday demanded that the targeting of journalists in the conflict zones must stop.

The Indian Women's Press Corps, the Press Association, and the Press Club of India issued a joint statement condemning the attack in Gaza. "The building was also used for residential purpose

by the journalists and their families. There can be no justification for bombing media houses and targeting their personnel and resources. It appears as a clear attempt to prevent media houses from reporting excesses that have become a routine affair in Gaza and the occupied parts of Palestine," the joint statement read. "We condemn such attacks. We demand that targeting of mediapersons, who are working in violence-hit conflict zones, be completely stopped immediately," it added.

The Editors Guild of India (EGI) has put out a separate statement.

"Given the recent background of escalating conflict in this region, EGI sees this as a de facto attack on news media by the Israeli government, which can disrupt the flow of news from this highly volatile region and which has global security implications. The Guild demands that the Israeli government give a detailed justification of the decision-making behind this attack."

Call to hold talks with vax makers to ramp up production

CONTINUED FROM P1

"BY that time, the pandemic itself would be over. We must have done this by October 2020, so that there was enough vaccine by January this year," Dr John said.

Criticising the Centre for not acting with foresight even now, K Sujatha Rao, former secretary in the Union health ministry, said: "It has to act immediately for the results to kick in at least four to five months from now. It is high time the government called all vaccine manufacturing companies, discussed with them the challenges the country is facing and help them with funds and the wherewithal to produce the vaccine in the required quantities, at least four

to six months from now."

Ramping up vaccine production is easier said than done, she said, since extreme care has to be taken while producing it as the vaccine involves using the attenuated strain of the Covid-19 virus to generate antibodies in the host, the human being, when administered.

"Though we have about 15 BSL-3 labs, all of them cannot produce vaccine overnight. They have to be custom-built for Covid-19. This throws up another challenge. If the companies make an investment, and make the vaccine, then the price might be high like Sputnik-V. If the government wants to control the price, then it should fund the necessary changes that had to be

made to BSL-3 labs," Sujatha Rao added.

Last week, the Department of Biotechnology said it has provided financial support to Maharashtra's state-owned company Haffkine Institute for manufacturing Covaxin. Haffkine does not have BSL-3, but the state government said it will provide ₹94 crore for upgrading the plant. It is expected to start production of 20 million doses per month from November.

While Haffkine said it needed 12 months to complete the ramp up, it was asked to cut

duration by half. It is now expected to start production of 20 million doses per month from November.

Besides, Bharat Biotech is reportedly in talks with another company, Panacea Biotech, for contract manufacturing Covaxin. Gujarat-based Hester Biosciences, too, has shown interest in its production.

A suggesting to set up an experts' committee to examine the status of existing labs came from Dr Tribhuban Mohan Mohapatra, chairman of the multi-disciplinary research unit and head of the

Covid testing lab at Banaras Hindu University. He urged the Centre to immediately set up the panel to inspect the existing labs and approve those that fulfil the criteria for vaccine manufacturing instead of wasting time in setting up new labs.

However, Dr Jacob John said the Centre has no role to play on vaccines anymore as the private companies are directly handling production.

Although Odisha does not have a BSL-3 lab for manufacturing vaccine, Bharat Biotech has recently started construction of its new production unit at Andharua on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar. If everything goes as per plan, vaccine production will commence by June 2022.

Though we have about 15 BSL-3 labs, all of them cannot produce vaccine overnight. They have to be custom-built for Covid-19. This throws up another challenge. If the companies make an investment, and make the vaccine, then the price might be high like Sputnik-V

K Sujatha Rao, former secretary, Union health ministry

Sena praises MP govt over policy to protect orphaned children

Maharashtra's ruling party Shiv Sena has heaped praise on the Madhya Pradesh government led by Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan for announcing a slew of measures to secure the future of the children who have lost their parents to Covid-19. In an editorial in the party's mouthpiece *Saamana*, the Sena praised Madhya Pradesh chief minister's recent announcement of '5000 monthly pension, free ration and education to the children whose parents fell prey to the viral infection.

BJP district office turned into Covid care centre



to the local Covid Care Centre in Chhatrapur district's Nowgaon. Meanwhile, the coronavirus-induced curfew in Bhopal and Berasia town in Madhya Pradesh was on Sunday extended till May 24 by Collector Avinash Lavaniya, an official said. The corona curfew, which was supposed to end at 6am on May 17, has earlier been given multiple week-long extensions since April 12.

To provide relief to the Covid-hit families, the ruling BJP has turned its district party office in Betul district into a full-fledged 50-bed Covid care centre. According to a state BJP functionary, the district party office in Betul now houses the Covid care centre for patients with mild symptoms. Besides providing medical and oxygen support, there is provision for meals as well. The ruling party has also supplied a large quantity of medical items and equipment



ANURAAG SINGH

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BHOPAL DIARY

More incidents of inter-caste violence in Morena

Inter-caste clashes between members of OBC and the general category or between Dalits and members of OBC or the general category in the Gwalior-Chambal region aren't new. In the region's Morena district, however, members of Valmiki, a Scheduled Caste, on Thursday opened fire indiscriminately and pelted stones outside the house of a municipal corporation official from the Jatav group, another Scheduled Caste. The video of the incident, which happened in the broad daylight in Morena's Uttapura locality, went viral within a few hours. The incident was the result of long-standing enmity between both sides. A few days ago, a similar incident happened in Morena, wherein a group of men from an OBC group, wearing masks, rode along a stretch of a road on their motorbikes, firing indiscriminately.

Israeli strikes kill 42, topple buildings in Gaza City

16 women, 10 children among those killed, 50 hurt | Israeli PM signals fourth war between Israel and Palestinians in Gaza would rage on

GAZA CITY

Israeli airstrikes on Gaza City flattened three buildings and killed at least 42 people Sunday, medics said, as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu signaled the fourth war between Israel and Palestinians in Gaza would rage on despite international efforts to broker a cease-fire.

In a televised address, Netanyahu said Sunday evening the attacks were continuing at 'full-force' and will 'take time.' Israel 'wants to levy a heavy price' from Gaza's militant Hamas rulers, he said, flanked by his defense minister and political rival, Benny Gantz, in a show of unity.

The Israeli air assault early Sunday was the deadliest single attack since heavy fighting broke out between Israel and Hamas nearly a week ago, marking the worst fighting here since the devastating 2014 war in Gaza.

The airstrikes hit a major downtown street of residential buildings and storefronts over the course of five minutes after midnight, destroying two adjacent buildings and one about 50 yards (meters) down the road.

At one point, a rescuer shouted, 'Can you hear me?' into a hole in the rubble. 'Are you OK?' Minutes later, first responders pulled a survivor out and carried him off on an orange stretcher. The Gaza Health Ministry said 16 women and 10 children were among those killed, with more than 50 people wounded, and rescue efforts are still underway.

Earlier, the Israeli military said it destroyed the home of Gaza's top Hamas leader, Yahiyeh Sinwar, in a separate strike in the southern town of Khan Younis. It was the third such attack in the last two days on the homes of senior Hamas leaders, who have gone underground.

Israel appears to have stepped up strikes in recent days to inflict as much damage as possible on Hamas as international mediators work to end the fighting and stave off



Palestinian paramedics search for survivors under the rubble of a destroyed building in Gaza City on Sunday | PICS: AFP



A Palestinian mother sits with her daughter, who was wounded in overnight Israeli air strikes on the Gaza Strip, as she receives treatment at Gaza City's Al-Shifa Hospital



Palestinian families walk past destroyed buildings as they leave their homes in Gaza City with some belongings to shelter in a safer neighbourhood



Palestinian paramedics evacuate a girl from the rubble of a destroyed building in Gaza City's Rimal residential district



A Palestinian girl cries as she looks out from her window at destroyed neighbouring buildings in Gaza City, following Israeli bombardment



Relatives of victims console each other outside Gaza City's Al-Shifa Hospital, following the Israeli bombardment of Gaza Strip on Sunday

POPE DENOUNCES VIOLENCE

Vatican City: Pope Francis has denounced the 'unacceptable' spiral of violence between Israel and the Palestinians, saying the deaths in particular of children was a 'sign that they don't want to build the future but want to destroy it.' Francis prayed for peace, calm and international help to open a path of dialogue during his Sunday blessing, delivered from his studio window overlooking St Peter's Square. The pope said: "I ask myself: this hatred and vendetta, what will it bring? Do we truly think that we can build peace by destroying the other?" AP

ISLAMIC NATIONS SLAM ISRAEL AND EACH OTHER'S TIES TO IT

Dubai: The 57-nation Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on Sunday demanded that Israel halt attacks killing Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip, even as fissures between countries over their recognition of Israel emerged. A statement by OIC hewed closely to previous ones it issued, including backing the call for Palestinians to have their own nation with East Jerusalem as its capital. However, recent normalization deals between Israel and some nations in the group, as well as their own concerns about Hamas, saw diplomats instead criticise each other. "The massacre of Palestinian children follows the purported normalization," Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said. "This criminal and genocidal regime has again proven that friendly gestures only aggravate its atrocities." AP

UN HEAD 'DEEPLY DISTURBED' BY ISRAELI AIR STRIKE

United Nations: UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric says Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is 'deeply disturbed' by the Israeli airstrike in Gaza City and is 'dismayed' by the increasing number of civilian casualties. "The secretary-general reminds all sides that any indiscriminate targeting of civilian and media structures violates international law and must be avoided at all costs," Stephane said on Saturday. AP

RIGHTS GROUP URGES ICC TO INVESTIGATE ISRAELI ATTACKS

Beirut: International human rights group Amnesty International has urged the International Criminal Court (ICC) to investigate the Israeli attack on a building housing media organisations and another where 10 people were killed, calling such attacks a war crime. AP

PROTESTERS IN MAJOR U.S. CITIES DECRY AIR STRIKES OVER GAZA

Los Angeles: Pro-Palestinian protesters took to the streets of Los Angeles, Boston, Philadelphia, Washington and other US cities to demand an end to Israeli airstrikes over the Gaza Strip. Thousands of people shut down traffic on a major thoroughfare in Los Angeles on Saturday as they marched to the Israeli consulate. AP

EXPRESS READ

Turkey eases Covid curbs but keeps many curfews

Istanbul: Turkey's interior ministry on Sunday lifted a full lockdown that had ordered people to stay home to fight Covid, shifting to a less-restrictive programme that still involved curfews on weeknights and weekends. In a new directive, the ministry called the steps that apply from Monday to June 1 a 'gradual normalisation.' Shopping malls will be able to reopen. Restaurants will be able to offer takeaway in addition to delivery. Preschools will resume in-person education but upper grades will continue remote learning. AP

22 people rescued after roller coaster gets stuck

Phoenix: Nearly two dozen people who were stranded after a roller coaster stalled mid-ride at an Arizona amusement park are safe. News reports and the Phoenix Fire Department say the ride at Castles N' Coasters in Phoenix got stuck Saturday, with riders perched 20 feet (six meters) off the ground. Rescue crews were dispatched and could escort 22 people off the ride safely. There was no immediate word on what caused the Desert Storm roller coaster to freeze up. AP

SRI LANKA

4 killed as heavy rain and flood hit Lanka

Colombo: At least 4 persons have died and over 11,500 others affected due to heavy rains and floods prevailing in several parts of Sri Lanka for the last few days, according to a media report. While two persons, including a 32-year-old man, died in flood in Aluthwatta area in Galle city, a 55-year-old man was buried alive after a mound of earth collapsed on his house in Kegalle district. Another person drowned in Wariyapola district, Colombo Page reported on Friday, quoting data from the Disaster Management Centre (DMC). According to DMC officials, 11,542 people belonging to 2,750 families in seven districts — Galle, Matara, Kurunegala, Kegalle, Gampaha, Colombo and Kalutara — have been affected due to the adverse weather conditions. Significant rainfall were received in many parts of the island nation and the Kalu, Kelani, Nilwala, Gin, Attanagalu Oya and Ma Oya rivers are overflowing. PTI

ASIA MATTERS



PAKISTAN

9 killed in shootout between tribal groups

Karachi: At least nine people were killed and five others injured in an exchange of firing between two tribal groups in Pakistan's Sindh province, according to a media report on Sunday. The shootout happened on Saturday between Jagirani and Chachar tribes in Kandhkot over long-standing enmity, ARY News reported. According to police, nine people were killed as a result of firing between them over long-standing enmity. Police said the bodies and injured have been shifted to the hospital. Tensions between the two groups spread fear and panic in the area. A heavy contingent of police arrived in the area to defuse the tension. PTI

BANGLADESH

Nationwide lockdown extended till May 23

Dhaka: Bangladesh on Sunday extended ongoing nationwide lockdown till May 23 to contain the second wave of the Covid pandemic. Bangladesh clamped a week-long nationwide lockdown on April 5, suspending public transport and shutting markets to combat the surge in coronavirus cases in the country. The restrictions were later extended till April 28, then till May 5 and then till May 16. "Lockdown restrictions are extended from May 16 in light of the current state of the pandemic," the Cabinet Division said in a notice on Sunday. All offices and organisations related to revenue collection have been included under emergency services, which will be out of the purview of the restrictions, the Daily Star newspaper reported. Besides, shops that sell food items, hotels and restaurants will only be allowed to provide takeaway or online services during the period, the circular said. PTI



ALL THAT IS LEFT

Emergency workers at the scene of a suspected gas explosion, in which a young child was killed and two people were seriously injured, in Heysham, England, on Sunday | AP/PTI

Afghan ceasefire ends amid calls for fresh talks

KABUL

A THREE-DAY ceasefire marked by violent attacks, most claimed by the Islamic State (IS), ended on Sunday in Afghanistan amid calls for renewed peace talks between the government and Taliban.

Taliban political spokesman Suhail Shaheen said the negotiating teams of the government and the Islamic Emirate, as the Taliban refer to their ousted regime, met briefly Saturday in the Middle Eastern State of Qatar.

They renewed their commitment to finding a peaceful end

to the war and called for an early start to talks that have been stalled, he said.

The US has been pressing for accelerated talks as it withdraws the last of its 2,500-3,500 soldiers and NATO's remaining 7,000 allied forces.

Even as the Taliban and government signed on to the ceasefire, which was declared to mark Eid, violence continued unabated in Afghanistan.

A bombing on Friday in a mosque north of the capital killed 12 worshippers, including the prayer leader.

Another 15 people were wounded. The Taliban denied involvement and blamed the government intelligence agency.

In a statement on Sunday, the IS affiliate took responsibility for the mosque attack, saying its fighters planted an explosive device in 'a worship place for disbelievers Sufis,' killing the 'apostate Imam,' or prayer leader. The statement claimed 40 worshippers were wounded.

The IS also claimed it blew up several electrical grid stations over the weekend.

That left the capital Kabul in the dark for much of the three-day holiday that followed the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan.

On Saturday, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi expressed concern about the rapid withdrawal of US and NATO forces in a phone call with Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi.

Wang called the withdrawal hasty and warned it would 'severely' impact the Afghan peace process and negatively affect regional stability. He called on the United Nations to play a greater role. AP



FINANCIAL SECURITY IN THE POST-COVID 19 WORLD

There is a great need to prepare against potential financial shocks that could come in multiple forms

RAJAS KELKAR

FINANCIAL security will have a new meaning in the post-COVID-19 world. The idea you had about future healthcare needs a new look. The retirement plan you had before the pandemic may need a makeover. The marriage budget you worked on 18 months ago needs an overhaul. Your child's education will see changes in ways unheard of before. It is tough to come up with a plan as uncertainty rules over your long-term strategic financial goals.

Over the past 18 months, your finances may have witnessed an upheaval. If you are still lucky to have a steady income, you may want to rework your plans. There is a need for you to prepare against potential financial shocks that could come in multiple forms. Your family's healthcare has to be your top priority.

Striking a balance between your income, investments, expenditure will help you take on any future health situation.

In India, we are grossly underinvested in healthcare. Individually, as well as at the government level. One in three Indians has some health cover. However, nearly two-thirds of the population has to use up its own money to pay for any health calamity, according to

the latest Economic Survey for 2020-21.

At the government level, the situation is even worse. Healthcare spending in India is just under 1 per cent of gross domestic product or GDP. According to the World Bank estimates, in China, it is 3 per cent, and in the US 8.5 per cent. If India wishes to be a great power in the future, that has to rise. However, this is easier said than done. The shortage of hospital beds, nurses and doctors would make it harder to take healthcare services to every citizen even if it enhances expenditure. It would take at least 15 years for India to provide adequate healthcare to everyone if we started today.

That makes you vulnerable. Your savings and investments have to be spread across asset classes. There are three critical aspects that you need to know before you reset your financial planning.

The importance of emergency funds

No other crisis can explain the need to have an emergency fund. Before COVID-19, financial planners recommended a 6-12 month salary or monthly income as an emergency fund. Many are now recommending

much more than that. It was hard enough to achieve the previous target for most of you. As expenses mount, savings and investing across the board would see pressure. The clear message from the crisis is that you must have an emergency fund. That is your money in fixed deposits or savings account or a liquid fund that is available for you instantly.

More household income

That may sound a bit perverse. But merely cutting expenditure may not be enough for your financial security. You may have

to figure out a way to generate additional income. If your work allows you to scale up, you need to do everything possible to enhance your income. If you have an educated spouse at home, you may want to work together to boost income. There is a discussion in many family groups about nuclear families getting back together to rationalise costs and revenue. If you get along with your family, that is an option to cut expenditure and boost income over the next few years. If you have been investing for a long time, you must make them work to generate additional annual revenue to help with increased expenditure.

MARKET

Nifty likely to range between 14,200-15,000 this week

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ New Delhi

BENCHMARK indices are expected to remain range bound this week in the absence of any major trigger. According to experts, the NSE Nifty is likely to fluctuate between the 14,200 and 15,000 levels, which has been the case for nearly three weeks now as investors are balancing the adverse impact of second Covid-19 wave and weak global cues (mainly rising US inflation) with hopes of a strong economic recovery and stock specific trading.

"The benchmark index is lacking a directional move after a prolonged rally and is now contained within a consolidation range of 14,400 to 15,000. Nifty Bank and other indices are also forming similar patterns. We maintain a bearish bias on the markets in the short term at least till the immediate resistance levels aren't broken," said Nirali Shah, Head of Equity Research, Samco Securities. Gaurav Garg, Head of Research Capital Via Global Research told this publication that the market can be on the positive side if the index stays above the 14,500 level, but if it drops below this level, it would pull the index even lower.

"Although India is reporting close to 0.35 million fresh cases every day. One thing that is worrying is the shortage of vaccines and other facilities... Overall, the market may trade in the range of 14200-15000 for the coming week," he added.

The Indian stock markets had snapped their two-week rally last week due to rising fears of higher US inflation due to a surge in commodity prices and a sell-off in the metal index. The BSE Sensex corrected 473.92 points during the week to close at 48,732.55, while the Nifty fell 145.35 points to 14,677.80. US inflation rates and bond yields are expected to continue impacting domestic markets.



Latest SGB series open for subscription today

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ New Delhi

LAST week the government in consultation with the RBI announced the latest Sovereign Gold Bond series, which will be open for subscription for five days from May 17. But given the uncertainty around the pandemic, should one apply? The Government of India has fixed the issue price for Sovereign Gold Bond (SGB) Scheme 2021-22 at ₹4,777 per gram.

The government, in consultation with the RBI, has also decided to offer a discount of ₹50 per gram less than the nominal value to those investors applying online and if the payment against the application is made via digital mode.

"The Sovereign Gold Bonds will be issued in six tranches from May 2021 to September 2021," the Union finance ministry said in a statement issued last week. The first tranche will be open for subscription from May 17, 2021, to May 21 and issued on May 25.

According to Ketan Kothari, Director of Augmont, a digital gold company, the pandemic and high prices have impacted gold sales, even on occasions like Akshay Tritiya, a usually auspicious time for buying gold which sees record sales.



"So during these uncertain times, survival and saving cash for uncertainty is the preference of customers now," Kothari added.

Others were of the view that the SGB will attract a class of investors who have booked profit in the market and will park some money in here.

"Stock markets are both volatile and not rightly priced. So many clients who have booked profit want to invest a portion in the sovereign gold bond. However, given the liquidity requirement, people are reluctant to invest a large amount and rightly so, given the nature of the pandemic and the five-year lock-in period. So, even those who can afford to invest are reluctant. Still, investing 10 per cent of your portfolio is not a bad decision either," Rohit Jain, a personal finance advisor based in Mumbai, said.

For those who are interested, these Gold Bonds will be sold through all Scheduled Commercial banks (except Small Finance Banks and Payment Banks), Stock Holding Corporation of India Limited (SHCIL), designated post offices, and recognised stock exchanges such as the National Stock Exchange of India Limited and Bombay Stock Exchange Limited.

The minimum permissible investment in the SGB will be 1 gram of gold. The maximum limit of subscription shall be 4 KG for individual. The tenor of the bond will be for a period of eight years with an exit option after the fifth year to be exercised on the next interest payment dates.

KEY FEATURES OF THE BOND

ELIGIBILITY: The Bonds will be restricted for sale to resident individuals, HUFs, Trusts, Universities and Charitable Institutions.

INTEREST RATE: The investors will be compensated at a fixed rate of 2.50 per cent per annum payable semi-annually on the nominal value.

MINIMUM SIZE: Minimum permissible investment will be 1 gram of gold.

MAXIMUM LIMIT: The maximum limit of subscription shall be 4 KG for individual, 4 Kg for HUF and 20 Kg for trusts and similar entities per fiscal (April-March) notified by the Government from time to time. A self-declaration to this effect will be obtained. The annual ceiling will include bonds subscribed under different tranches during initial issuance by Government and those purchased from the Secondary Market.

TAX TREATMENT: The interest on Gold Bonds shall be taxable as per the provision of Income Tax Act, 1961 (43 of 1961). The capital gains tax arising on redemption of SGB to an individual has been exempted. The indexation benefits will be provided to long term capital gains arising to any person on transfer of bond.

TENOR: The tenor of the Bond will be for a period of 8 years with exit option after the 5th year to be exercised on the next interest payment dates.

TODAY'S STOCK PICK

JSPL

Current Price

₹417.15

Target Price

₹539

Disclaimer: The views and recommendations made above are that of the individual analyst or broking company, and not that of TVNIE.



JSPL has proposed sale of Jindal Power (JPL). While we find the enterprise value (EV) of ₹1,995b, implying ~3.7x FY23E EV/EBITDA, for the asset a bit underwhelming, it does improve the growth outlook for the Steel business by freeing up both the Balance Sheet and management bandwidth. JSPL has already announced its intent to double capacity at Angul to 12mtpa. We expect that access to global capital should improve for JSPL.

— Motilal Oswal Securities Limited

MONEY-WISE

A DEEP DIVE INTO INTERNATIONAL MUTUAL FUNDS

An international mutual fund also known as Overseas Fund, as the name suggests, is a mutual fund that invests in Equity, Equity-related instruments and debt instruments of foreign companies i.e. based outside India.

There are two ways in which the fund manager can invest in foreign companies - by directly purchasing the stocks of companies listed outside India or by investing in an existing global fund that already has a portfolio consisting of foreign stocks. Regardless of which way is picked and which country the money is invested in, it is regulated by Securities Exchange Board of India.

International funds can help investors to broaden their investment horizons, resulting in a higher potential for return but it also carries high level of risks. These funds help to take advantage of global stock markets. However, understanding the global market movements, economic changes and their impact on fund investment is extremely difficult.

Types of International Mutual Fund

Global Funds: These funds invest globally including in the home country. Whereas foreign funds are those available only in other countries.

Regional Funds: It invests in companies from a specific geographical region. For example, Europe, Asia, etc. Investors with thorough knowledge prefer buying regional funds instead of global ones.

Country funds: These invest in companies from a particular foreign country. It is very convenient as data is not spread across countries.

Global Sector Funds: These funds invest in a particular sector across the globe. Their primary agenda is to benefit from trends in a specific sector.

Advantages

Geographical Diversification: One of the biggest advantages of investing in international funds is diversification across the globe. It helps to leverage the opportunities in foreign markets when the Indian economy may not be doing well but others like US are.

Portfolio Diversification: International equity mutual funds are for higher risk tolerance investors, who are looking for portfolio diversification through investment in overseas markets so that when there is a market low in the home country, the one abroad can compensate for it.

Currency Diversification: The Indian rupee has been depreciating over the last few years, there are various reasons for this depreciation—from political instability to rising inflation levels to weak fiscal policies. One can take advantage of this situation by investing in international funds. When an investment is made in international funds, investors get exposure in foreign currency through investing in rupees. Any appreciation in the value of the foreign currency or any depreciation in the home currency will increase the returns.

Professional Management: An individual may not be able to understand global markets and economics of different countries. A fund manager invests the investor's money with the help of detailed data, technical expertise and experience of investing in foreign markets. This will help any new investor to take an opportunity in foreign markets through an international mutual fund.

Disadvantages

Expense Ratio: Asset Management Companies charge investors a fee called an expense ratio—the charge to cover the fund's administrative and operating costs, like a fund manager's salary. It is usually higher in International funds.

Economic & Political Risk: As international funds invest in other countries or regions, the change in the economic or political condition of the country can impact the performance of the country and, subsequently, this can affect the fund's performance.

Market Risk: The foreign country's market fluctuation or sectoral fluctuation can impact the overall performance of the fund.

Liquidity: In some foreign markets, securities trade less frequently, making it difficult to buy or sell securities.



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FINANCIAL
ADVICE

FUNDS COVERED

Franklin India Feeder Franklin US Opportunities Fund

With an AUM of ₹3,205 Crore this fund has an expense ratio of 1.58 percent. The asset allocation of this fund is predominantly in Equity & Equity related instruments of companies situated in U.S. The top sectors invested in are Information Technology, Healthcare and Consumer Discretionary. The fund's performance is as follows: 6-months returns is 5.27 per cent, 1-year return is 35.04 per cent and 3-years return is 22.73 per cent.

ICI Prudential US Bluechip Equity Fund

This fund has an AUM of ₹1,282 Crore and an expense ratio of 2.23 per cent. The fund invests in Equity instruments of companies based in US. The asset allocation is such that close to 98 per cent is in equity and equity-related instruments. The top sectoral investments of this fund lie in Technology, Services and Healthcare. The performance over 6-months, 1-year and 3-years horizon is 26.21 per cent, 41.09 per cent and 23.10 per cent respectively.

Edelweiss Greater China Equity Off-shore

It has an AUM of ₹1,272 crore and expense ratio of 2.37 per cent. The regions this fund's parent fund invests in include China, with a 71 per cent holding, Taiwan with 22 per cent holdings and Hong Kong with 6 per cent holdings. The top sectors include Information Technology, Consumer Discretionary and Financials. It has given returns of 12 per cent, 56.25 per cent and 24.44 per cent over the 6-months, 1-year and 3-years time frames.

Add-on life insurance policies come bundled with wide range of products

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ Chennai

WHEN one thinks of life insurance policies, the mind is quick to jump to the big guns—such as those from LIC, or other standardised, comprehensive policies from major life insurance companies. But a large variety of products nowadays come with add-on insurance covers that may offer substantial payouts. So, here are a few products that come with add-

on insurance covers.

Jan Dhan accounts

Among the most widespread add-on insurance covers, the Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY) policy is being offered as an add-on for Jan Dhan account-holders, who have been offered the option of subscribing for the policy that can be renewed up to 55 years of age. The annual premium is ₹330 and account

holders who are subscribers will have the premium deducted from their balances every year. Survivors can claim an amount of ₹2 lakh. However, if a policyholder has multiple such accounts, only one claim will be considered valid.

Mobile connection add-ons

The intensely competitive telecom services sector has, for a

while now, been providing subscribers with a wide variety of bundled offerings, some of which include insurance covers through partnerships with insurance firms. Bharti Airtel, for instance, has offered bundled life insurance to those who buy its mobile plans, with payouts ranging from ₹2-4 lakh. One partner was Bharti AXA Life Insurance, whose policy it

offered with a ₹179 pre-paid package. Another policy from HDFC Life was offered with its ₹279 plan—both covering those between 18-54 years of age.

Mutual fund accounts

Similar to those add-on packages offered by telecom companies, a large number of mutual funds have also often bundled insurance products. Such offerings are quite common with SIP schemes.

Employee Provident Fund

Subscribers to the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) have a small amount of the employers' contribution that is diverted into a premium payment for the Employee Deposit-Linked Insurance (EDLI) Scheme. This premium is for a life insurance policy with a sum assured of ₹2.5-7 lakh, but it is only paid if the person who expired was in service and contributing.





Dementia and Alzheimer's disease were the most common medical conditions linked with all Covid-19 deaths reported in 2020 in Canada. The brain disorders were the most common comorbidity among women (41%), while among men, it was the second most common comorbidity at 31%, CTVnews.ca said, citing a new report from Statistics Canada.

UK confident vaccines can shield against India variant

MEDICINE

LONDON: Britain is confident that existing vaccines will provide protection from a more transmissible Indian coronavirus variant now spreading across the country, Heath Secretary Matt Hancock said on Sunday.

Hancock told Sky News the government had a "high degree of confidence" that vaccines would stand up to the B.1.617.2 variant, following new early data from Oxford University.

Britain, one of the countries the worst hit by in the world with over 1.2 lakh deaths, has also seen a rapid deployment of vaccines with nearly 20 million people fully vaccinated.

According to government data the case numbers of the Indian variant have risen from 520 to 1,313 this week.

Hancock warned because of the high transmission of the Indian variant it could "spread like wildfire amongst the unvaccinated groups" and because of this the government "need to get as many people vaccinated as possible".

Cuba rolls out home-grown vaccines still in trial phase

World is closely watching the only Latin American nation to develop own Covid vaccines, which could do much to ease global shortages



People wait to be vaccinated in a socially-distanced queue in Havana, Cuba | AP

MEDICINE

HAVANA: Hundreds of thousands of Cubans have begun receiving new, locally produced vaccines against COVID-19 in the past few days as the socialist government has ramped up an inoculation campaign — even before releasing formal Phase III data on the vaccines' effectiveness and safety.

The island's health minister, José Ángel Portal Miranda, announced on May 7 that officials are still processing information from the large Phase III trials of the two vaccine candidates (see right sidebar). But he said that beginning mass vaccines now "has more benefits than risks. ... The number of sick and deceased is going to decrease."

The vaccines are a point of pride for a small and relatively poor nation of 11 million people that has prioritised its medical sector and has long boasted of exporting its own pharmaceuticals across the globe.

Officials say they pushed forward wide-scale inoculations

due to early evidence that the vaccines are safe and work and because of a recent upsurge in coronavirus infections.

Cuba has a long tradition of making its own vaccines, dating back to the 1980s.

Change in plan

Initially, the government had planned to roll out its vaccine program to the public in June, after authorization.

"If it were not for this epidemic situation, (the authorities) would have waited longer," said molecular biologist and researcher Amílcar Pérez-Riverol of the Sao Paulo University, referring to the infection surge.

Portal said between 1.7 million of the 2.1 million inhabitants of Havana, the epicentre of the outbreak, will be vaccinated between now and August. Of the island's total population, 22.6% should have received both shots by June, 33.5% by July, and 70% by Aug, he said.

"We have had very few adverse events. Some patients experience a little tiredness," said Dr. Naicy Guzmán, director of

Calling its own shots

If any of Cuba's vaccines get the final green light, it will be the first Covid vaccine developed in Latin America

5 CORONAVIRUS VACCINES CUBA IS WORKING ON

2 candidates — Abdala & Soberana 2 — have either completed Phase 3 trials or are soon to complete them

4 lakh people covered by the Phase 3 trials — an unusually large number

3 doses While most other vaccines have relied upon a two-dose regime, Abdala requires three doses to be applied at 14-day intervals, news reports indicated

a clinic in Havana's Habana del Este neighborhood. "All this is moving for me," she said.

The clinic uses the Abdala vaccine, Guzmán said.

"My people, my brothers, my community will be vaccinated against this disease that has really shaken us. It has been a long and intense fight."

that 66 out of 78 Covid-19 swab samples sequenced by her team had the highly transmissible B.1.1.7 variant — the strain first detected in UK and classified as a variant of concern by the WHO.

Malavige warns that the "situation in Sri Lanka is looking very grim" with hospitals filling up fast, *Nature* reported. "It's important to ramp up our sequencing to make sure we detect these variants in the community as soon as possible," Malavige was quoted as saying. She is doubling the average number of samples sequenced every month from May to nearly 200.

In Bangladesh, too, scientists are worried about variants. "We all have the question of why is it happening? Why is this wave now? And why is it so bad?" asks Senjuti Saha, a molecular geneticist in Dhaka. Labs in the country are increasingly getting involved in sequencing genomes, though Bangladesh's coronavirus cases have fallen from their mid-April peak of 7,000 a day, *Nature* reported.

Unusual heart study sheds light on best aspirin dose

RESEARCH

WASHINGTON: An unusual study that had thousands of heart disease patients enroll themselves and track their health online as they took low- or regular-strength aspirin concludes that both doses seem equally safe and effective for preventing additional heart problems and strokes.

But there's a big caveat: People had such a strong preference for the lower dose that it's unclear if the results can es-

tablish that the treatments are truly equivalent, some independent experts said. Half who were told to take the higher dose took the lower one instead or quit using aspirin altogether.

"Patients basically decided for themselves" what they wanted to take because they bought the aspirin on their own, said Dr. Salim Virani, a cardiologist at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston who had no role in the study. Still, the results show there's

little reason to take the higher dose, 325 mg, which many doctors assumed would work better than 81-mg.

Results were published on Saturday by the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

Aspirin helps prevent blood clots, but it's not recommended for healthy people who have not yet developed heart disease because it carries a risk of bleeding. Its benefits are clear, though, for folks who already have had a heart attack, bypass surgery or clogged arteries re-

quiring a stent.

But the best dose isn't known, and the study aimed to compare them in a real-world setting.

About 15,000 people received invitations to join through the mail, email or a phone call and enrolled on a website where they returned every three to six months for follow-up. A network of participating health centers supplied medical information on participants from their electronic records and insurance claims.



People venture dangerously close to a lava eruption of the Fagradalsfjall volcano on the Reykjanes Peninsula in Iceland | AP

New booster shots needed in 2022: German expert

MEDICINE

THE head of Germany's independent vaccine advisory panel says it's likely that everyone will have to get vaccinated again next year against Covid-19.

Thomas Mertens told the Funke newspaper group in comments published Sunday

that there isn't yet enough data to say when exactly booster shots will be needed, and officials will have to wait a few months to see whether protection against the coronavirus weakens in some groups.

But he stressed that "the virus won't leave us again" and so the vaccinations currently under way won't be the last. He

added: "In principle, we have to prepare for everyone possibly having to refresh their vaccine protection next year."

Nearly 30.4 million people in Germany, or 36.5% of the population, had received at least one vaccine shot by Friday. More than 9 million, or 10.9% of the population, had been fully vaccinated.

Space weather mystery solved

RESEARCH

LONDON: Scientists have long questioned why the bursts of hot gas from the sun do not cool down as fast as expected, and have now used a supercomputer to find out.

When the solar wind hits the Earth, it is almost 10 times hotter than expected, with a temperature of about 100,000 to 200,000 degrees Celsius. The outer atmosphere of the sun, where the solar wind originates, is typically a million degrees Celsius.

Using these simulations, the team, led by University College London (UCL) researchers, deduced that the solar wind stays hot for longer because of small-scale magnetic reconnection that forms in the turbulence of the solar wind.

This phenomenon occurs when two opposing magnetic field lines break and reconnect with each other, releasing huge amounts of energy. This is the same process that triggers large flares erupting from the sun's outer atmosphere.

"Magnetic reconnection occurs almost spontaneously and all the time in the turbulent solar wind," said lead author Jeffersson Agudelo of UCL.

India's neighbours scramble to sequence genomes amid sharp increases in Covid cases

SCIENCE

RESEARCHERS in South Asia are racing to scale up their limited genome sequencing abilities to find out whether India's coronavirus wave is spilling over into their countries.

The news section of the prestigious *Nature* journal reported that the researchers are also working to identify which variants are in circulation.

Neelika Malavige, who runs Sri Lanka's only lab that sequences coronavirus genomes, found in the middle of April

that 66 out of 78 Covid-19 swab samples sequenced by her team had the highly transmissible B.1.1.7 variant — the strain first detected in UK and classified as a variant of concern by the WHO.

Malavige warns that the "situation in Sri Lanka is looking very grim" with hospitals filling up fast, *Nature* reported.

"It's important to ramp up our sequencing to make sure we detect these variants in the community as soon as possible," Malavige was quoted as saying. She is doubling the average

number of samples sequenced every month from May to nearly 200.

In Bangladesh, too, scientists are worried about variants. "We all have the question of why is it happening? Why is this wave now? And why is it so bad?" asks Senjuti Saha, a molecular geneticist in Dhaka. Labs in the country are increasingly getting involved in sequencing genomes, though Bangladesh's coronavirus cases have fallen from their mid-April peak of 7,000 a day, *Nature* reported.

HUNTING VARIANTS

% of cases sequenced & shared through GISAID, a database of genomes



Even as India reels under a massive surge of cases, its neighbours are experiencing their largest outbreaks yet

Gavin Smith, a viral evolutionary biologist at Duke-NUS Medical School in Singapore, told the outlet: "Sequencing has always been important, but it is critical now, because we are getting to a stage where more and more new variants are cropping up."

"We need sequence data to see what is going on."

Bangladesh's coronavirus surge has been linked to broad detection of the B.1.351 variant, which was first found in South Africa and has been known to reduce the effective-

ness of the Covishield vaccine. This is particularly worrying for Bangladesh because most of its vaccine stock is Covishield.

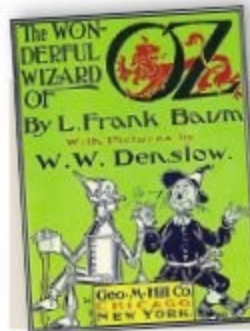
Nature reported that researchers in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have not yet found the Indian variant, B.1.617, in their countries, though the strain may be circulating undetected due to limited lab infrastructure for genome sequencing.

But Nepal has reported at least 11 cases of B.1.617 variant, suggesting that it is in cir-

ulation in the country.

Genome sequencing is not easy and takes time to process. Malavige's lab uses a shortcut by employing RT-PCR tests that "detect three widely circulating variants of concern: B.1.1.7, B.1.351 and P.1. But kits that detect B.1.617 have only just been developed and they cannot identify newly emerging variants," *Nature* said.

"We are at a critical point where we need to keep sequencing to identify anything as soon as possible," Malavige was quoted as saying.



DAY'S DIARY
Book published
The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, a children's book written by L. Frank Baum was first published on this day in 1900

A CLASSIC
A modern fairy tale with a delightfully levelheaded and assertive heroine, and engaging fantasy characters, the story was enormously popular and became a classic of children's literature



MULTIPLE TITLES
The book was illustrated by WW Denslow. It was originally published by the George M Hill company in Chicago, and has since been reprinted countless times, sometimes under the name *The Wizard of Oz*



OTHER BOOKS
Baum wrote 13 more Oz books, and the series was continued by another after his death. The 1939 adaptation of Baum's first Oz book became a landmark of 20th Century cinema

Kotigobba 3 looks at theatre release

PG 4

A shot at love



People are also spending more time getting to know each other. They aren't jumping to conclusions quickly or meeting them soon after connecting. The conversations are more serious

- Ravi Mittal, founder and CEO, QuackQuack

SIMRAN AHUJA

THE pandemic has affected every area of life and dating is no exception. Now, questions about vaccination are just as common as conversations about interests, hobbies and the usual fare. Recent data from app OkCupid shows that among Indian daters, people who answered 'yes' to the question 'Will you get the Covid-19 vaccine?' received 25 per cent more likes and resulting conversations than those who answered 'no'. "This is a clear indication that daters are prioritising health and safety in their quest to find love. Forty-one per cent

Vaccines are the talk of town these days, even on dating apps, where someone's views on the jab, and ideas on even climate change, can make or break a conversation

women went so far as to say they would cancel a date with an anti-vaxxer compared to 30 per cent men," says Sitara Menon, senior marketing manager, OkCupid.

Questions on vaccination were added in January and data has been gathered from around 90,000 users across India, according to a company representative.

Online dating platform QuackQuack reported similar findings last week. Around 73 per cent of 20,000 respondents surveyed across India between February-end and early April, said they would want their date to be vaccinated.

"People are also spending more time getting to know each other. They aren't jumping to conclusions quickly or meeting them soon after connecting. The conversations are more serious," says Ravi Mittal, founder and CEO of the platform.

Topics of discussion too have changed in the past year. "Last year, daters spent time talking about masking and physical distancing. Now, it's more about people's take on vaccines, what the situation is like in the area

of residence of the other person and so on," says Mittal.

For city-based copywriter Hitika P, the vaccine seems to be the only way to regain some semblance of the old normal. She says that if she were to meet someone she knows beforehand or a person recommended by a mutual friend, the vaccine wouldn't play that much of a role. But meeting a stranger through a dating app comes with an added layer of concern. "If it's someone I don't know at all, I'd only like to meet them after they get both their doses of a vaccine," she adds.

Celebrity makeup artiste Anjali Tater, on the other hand, is trying her best to guide those with misconceptions in a different direction. "Some think the vaccine can be harmful. Instead of cutting these conversations off, I try to have a friendly chat with them. I ask them what their fears are and then share my views if I've read something that counters their view. I've learned that it's best to sprout a seed of curiosity and then leave them to do their own research."



ONE FOR PLANET EARTH

According to another study by OkCupid, millennials are also keen on meeting people who share their views on climate change. Data shared by the team read, "Climate change is surely a leading issue for the majority of the millennial daters with most of them agreeing to the need to add a profile badge to their profiles, show their support and match with someone who cares about the environment equally. Data reveals that 84 per cent users in India, 88 per cent users in Turkey, 90 per cent in UK and 86 per cent in the US say they're hugely concerned about climate change and would want a profile badge to be added to their profile to showcase the same to avoid meeting anybody who is not on their wavelength."



Living on hope

Musician Vasu Dixit on his emotional attachment to his new song *Mere Khuda*

MONIKA MONALISA

The Greek philosopher Plato had once said, "Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and life to everything." These words still hold true for many, including singer **Vasu Dixit**. He hopes that his latest song - *Mere Khuda* - released on May 14 will help people through these tough times.

The events that made the song a reality still make Dixit emotional. It was written by Ustad Abdul Rashid Khan in 2013 and gifted to him. "My wife Bindhumalini is a disciple of Ustad Abdul Rashid Khan saab, and I visited him sometimes. Once, I sang one of my songs to him. He blessed me ₹100 and as a return gift, he gave me his words for *Mere Khuda* and asked me to compose it. It was rare for him to ask someone to compose his writing," says Dixit.

The next two years went by with no result. Although Dixit was emotional about the song, it was also a great responsibility. The Ustad passed away in 2016 and it was only much later that he was able to compose a tune for the song. The music simply "flew", Dixit says.

In 2018, he recorded the song in his studio and shot it too. Unfortunately, the hard disc with the audio and video recordings crashed, leaving him with only bits and pieces of the material. And then they worked on it again.

Asked why he released the song only now, despite his emotional attachment to it, Dixit says, "This is a song I feel world needs right now. I hope, during these difficult times, the song touches someone on a deeper level, the way it did for me."

He has never performed this song at any of his corporate shows, where he feels people will not 'feel the song'. To capture that sense of innocence in the song, he brought in a part where children sing the lines after him.

This is a song I feel world needs right now. I hope, during these difficult times, the song touches someone on a deeper level, the way it did for me. Vasu Dixit, musician

MANE CONCERT

For Dixit, music is reason enough to celebrate. His virtual Mane concerts (home concerts) are a classic example of that. "Why do you need a festival or occasion for your family to get together? People are staying indoors due to the lockdown. Since music is what I can give people, I've decided to go ahead with my mane concerts idea, where families can get together and listen to me," he says. It is not priced and people can offer him whatever they please.

CITY READ

Hospital launches 'oxygen on wheels'

Maharaja Agrasen Hospital, Bengaluru, in association with Greenwood High International School, Bengaluru has come up with an initiative offering critical support to patients by launching five buses that will provide free oxygen to people waiting to get a bed outside city hospitals. Each bus has been re-designed to accommodate 12 patients at any given time.



Home sweet home

Nidhi Subbaiah is back home after *Bigg Boss* and she is definitely all smiles about it. The actor recently posted two photos on Instagram - a throwback one and a current one. Both are with mommy dearest and Nidhi's sweet caption read, "Back to my safest place on the earth! Then, Now, Always".

Debolina Ray, a city-based blogger, who runs She Knows Grub, dishes out food-related trivia in this weekly series. So, answer these questions and find out how much of a foodie you are.



THE QUIZ WILL BE PUBLISHED EVERY SATURDAY
Send answers to bengalurucityexpress@gmail.com with the subject line 'Food quiz'

The correct answers and names of the first three respondents are published here. The first prize winner this week will receive a complimentary voucher (worth ₹2,500) from Sriracha**

THE RIGHT ANSWERS

1. Baba Budan; 2. Belagavi; Belagavi Kunda; 3. Khmer Kitchen in JP Nagar

FIRST THREE TO GET IT RIGHT

- Mayuri N
- Ramesh MP
- T R Prabhakar

**Conditions apply

A SHARADHAA

WHAT began as a hundred phone calls in March, has snowballed into around a thousand calls a day from people reaching out to actor **Bhuvan Ponnanna** seeking oxygen and ICU beds for loved ones sick with Covid-19.

He and **Harshika Poonacha** are among several Sandalwood celebrities who have jumped into the unfolding crisis to lend a hand.

"It began when he shared his phone number on Facebook at the start of the second wave," Poonacha says. Initially, he got around 200 calls, and now it has turned into around a thousand. They now have nine volunteers, and have formed 10 WhatsApp groups and one Telegram group to keep pace with the flood of requests for resources.

"We've managed to save close to 170 lives by providing ICU beds and other medical facilities. By doing these small things, I feel as if my life is of some value," Poonacha says.

On Friday, Health Minister Dr K Sudhakar inaugurated

Giving a breath of LIFE

Harshika Poonacha on working for Covid relief and what a moving experience it has been

two projects - Shwasa and Bandhava - launched by the two Sandalwood actors.

Poonacha says they set up the Oxygen Express buses under the Shwasa programme as Oxygen is in scarce supply and people are even dying in front of hospitals as they do not get in time.

At present two buses would be fitted with five oxygen concentrators each and staffed with two nurses working in shifts. They would be parked near Victoria Hospital and Bowring Hospitals.

"People struggling to breathe



could get oxygen sitting in the bus while they wait for a bed to be allotted. The service is free," Poonacha says. CS Water Proofing Solution and Bhuvan Foundation are funding the oxygen concentrators.

She said talks are on to tie up with various hospitals and the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike.

The Bandhava programme - an

initiative by the Bhuvanam Foundation - will use autorickshaws to deliver essentials, and even oxygen, to Covid patients recovering or isolating at home.

"Since BBMP has put posts in front of their gates, many hesitate to deliver medicines or essential items, and we are connecting with these people. We currently have five autos, and volunteers will do the needful," she says.

Although the two actors are focusing on Bengaluru, they haven't forgotten their fellow artists and other workers in the film industry. They have given grocery kits to production staff. This initiative, which both Ponnanna and Poonacha handle, is currently being done through their savings.

The two actors have also travelled to different cities in the state distributing grocery kits and food packets under their ongoing project Feed Karnataka.





BRUNCH TIME

Alott Bengaluru Cessna Business Park, a Marriott International Hotel, is home delivering a brunch spread that includes soups, salads, desi chaats, pastas, tandoori items, biryanis, a selection of Indian and international main courses and more.

When: Sundays
Details: Call 8884452271



COMEDY FOR A CAUSE

ABC Production & Cushion Comedy is putting together this fundraiser show for Covid relief. When & where: May 17, 10pm. Details: bookmymshow



BIRYANI BINGE

ITC Hotels expands its food delivery network with its second cloud kitchen in Bengaluru, and catering will be handled by the kitchens of ITC Windsor. Their biryani and pulao collection will be available to order for the residents of Whitefield through food aggregator Swiggy.



JAPANESE DECOR

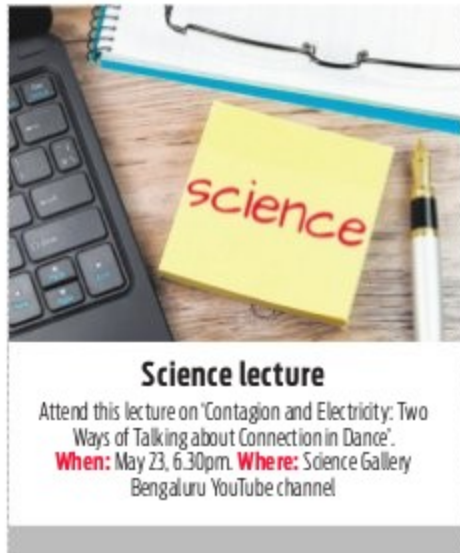
Inspired by the ancient art of Japanese paper folding, the Origami collection by Kaleen India explores geometry and line — from realistic depictions of folded birds and flowers to abstract lined graphics. Available at: kaleen-india.com

KALKI FASHION'S NEW COLLECTION INCLUDES CLOTHES WITH EMBROIDERED TULLE, CRYSTAL-BEADED SILHOUETTES AND MORE. DETAILS: KALKI FASHION'S WEBSITE



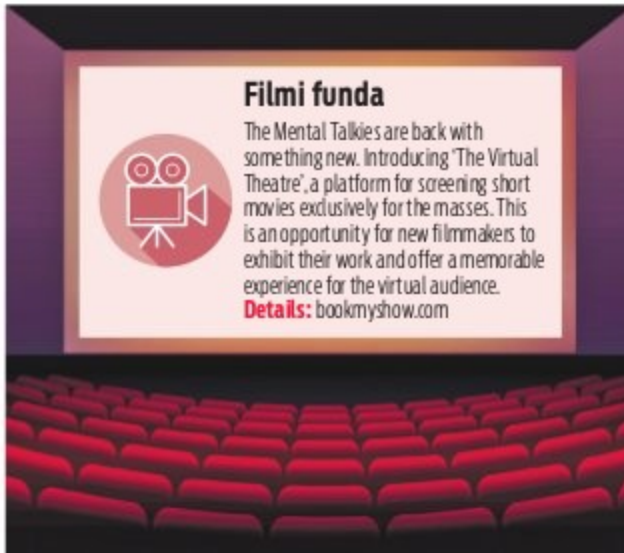
Covid care dabba

Grand Mercure Bengaluru at Gopalan Mall launches a care dabba, a Covid-19 care meal subscription plan. The initiative aims on providing healthy balanced meals to quarantined individuals at a subsidised price. For details: Call 95132 8992



Science lecture

Attend this lecture on 'Contagion and Electricity: Two Ways of Talking about Connection in Dance'. When: May 23, 6.30pm. Where: Science Gallery Bengaluru YouTube channel



Filmi funda

The Mental Talks are back with something new. Introducing 'The Virtual Theatre', a platform for screening short movies exclusively for the masses. This is an opportunity for new filmmakers to exhibit their work and offer a memorable experience for the virtual audience. Details: bookmymshow.com



Write mode

Learn the art of writing by taking this course by Ruskin Bond. With over 70 years of experience, Bond needs no introduction. His class will provide you with the right guidance to become a good writer. When: Till May 30. Details: bookmymshow.com



Running effect

Reebok introduces the spring summer variant of the Liquefit 180, a high-performance running shoe that has great cushioning, long-lasting comfort and lock in support from heel to toe. It comes in different colours and is priced at Rs 6,599. Available at shop4eebok.com, Flipkart and Amazon

QUICK FIX

What's cooking IN YOUR KITCHEN?

We are hungry for recipes with minimum ingredients and maximum flavours. Share your quick-fix with us, along with step-by-step photos, at cityexpresschn@gmail.com.



INDIAN SPICED EGGPLANT

INGREDIENTS

- Eggplants: 2, cut into 2cm cubes
- Sunflower oil: 1/4 cup ■ Ginger: Finely chopped
- Ground coriander: 2 tsp
- Cumin seeds: 15 tsp
- Fennel seeds, Mustard seeds, Fenugreek seeds, Hot chilli powder, Ground turmeric: 1/2 tsp
- Chopped tomatoes: 400 g can
- Coriander leaves for garnish

METHOD

- Sprinkle salt on the eggplant cubes. Set aside to drain for 10 minutes, then rinse well and pat dry.
- Heat oil in a wok over medium heat. Add ginger and spices and cook, stirring, for 2-3 minutes. In batches, add the eggplant cubes and cook, stirring, for 5 minutes or until the eggplant has softened slightly.
- Then stir in the canned tomato and 1 cup water. Bring to boil, then simmer for 12-15 minutes until the eggplant is tender and the sauce has thickened.
- Season with salt, garnish with coriander and serve.

— Tina Mehta, Dwarka

FIT BIT

KAKI MUDRA

(CROW'S BEAK GESTURE)

In Sanskrit, 'kaki' means crow and 'mudra' means gesture. Your mouth in this pose, on inhalation, resembles a crow's beak. This breathing exercise teaches yogis to control their breath. It is also a therapeutic breathing technique because it helps people who have a tendency to hyper-inflate their lungs like those suffering from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, panic attacks and bronchospasms. It is effective in slowing and controlling the breath because on both inhalation and exhalation the air flow is restricted. It stimulates the Vishuddhi (throat) chakra which is thought to affect the thyroid gland.

STEPS

- Sit in any comfortable meditation asana like Padmasana, Sukhasana, Swastikasana, Siddhasana or Vajrasana, or on a chair.
- Close your eyes and breath normally with attention on the inhalation and exhalation.
- Pout your lips to make it rounded like a crow's beak, so that you can breathe in through the mouth and through the lips.
- Take your attention to the tip of the nose.
- Breathe in slowly and deeply through the mouth. Hold the air inside for a few seconds.
- Close the lips and breathe out slowly through the nose.
- Repeat this for at least 2-5 minutes. You can practise this longer if you wish.

BENEFITS

- The inhaled air stimulates the wall of the mouth and pharynx. This activates the digestive secretions.
- Gives benefits of Nasikagra Dhrsti as well because the attention is held on the tip of the nose.
- Eliminates many illnesses and keeps the body healthy.
- Gives blemish-free complexion.
- Good for the skin and reduces wrinkles on the face.
- Enhances health as well as longevity.
- Gives benefits similar to Sheetal Pranayama as both cool the body.
- Improves immunity.

LIMITATIONS

- Those suffering from glaucoma or diabetic retinopathy, depression or low blood pressure, chronic constipation and have had recent eye operation, should avoid this.
- Attain Nasikagra Dhrsti only if you have practised it before.
- Avoid practice in cool weather or in a polluted area.
- Keep eyes open while holding the mudra without straining the eyes.

— by N. Elumalai, PhD scholar (Yoga Science) at a Meenakshi Academy of Higher Education & Research, Chennai



SOUND BOARD

VEDANTA TALKS

These are talks given by Swami Sarvapriyananda at the Vedanta Society of New York (founded by Swami Vivekananda in 1894). Based on the Vedas, the sacred scriptures of India, Vedanta affirms the oneness of existence, the divinity of the soul, and the harmony of religions.

● On Apple Podcast

BELLWETHERS PODCAST

Bellwethers Podcast aims to enlighten minds with featuring some leaders, entrepreneurs and influencers from all around the world and share stories of how they achieved what everyone else thought was impossible.

● On Spotify

THEN WHAT ELSE?

Comedians Chitan and Sarvesh invite other artists to talk about anything and everything under the sun, until of course, one of them runs out of things to say and responds with the inevitable "Alright... then what else?"

● On Apple Podcasts

THE PEOPLE'S PHARMACY

Pharmacologist Joe Graedon and medical anthropologist Terry Graedon talk to leading experts to discuss their research on issues relating to drugs, herbs, home remedies, vitamins and related health topics.

● On Apple Podcast

CURIOSITY DAILY

Discovery's Cody Gough and Ashley Hamer will help you learn about your mind and body, outer space and the depths of the sea, and how history shaped the world into what it is today.

● On Google Podcast

POPULAR ON YOUTUBE

FIRST RANK RAJU

Raju, a bookish young man, fails a job interview owing to his lack of practical knowledge and contemplates suicide. So his parents decide to make him more pragmatic and ready to face the real world.

● Cast: Gurunandan, Apoorva Gowda

DIA

Dia takes three years to confess her feelings to Rohith but after a terrible accident, she is told he does not survive. Later, when she starts seeing Adi, she finds out that Rohith is still alive.

● Cast: Kushi, Pruthvi Ambaar

RANNA

Sharat assures his ageing grandfather that he will reunite him with his estranged daughter. To fulfil his promise, he goes to work for the woman's family as a driver.

● Cast: Sudeep, Rachita Ram

RAJA RANI

Rani, an impoverished woman, meets Raja, a wealthy actor, and pretends to be rich. However, Babu, who lusts after her and knows her truth, tries to wreck their relationship.

● Cast: Sivaji Ganesan, Padmini, SS Rajendran, TA Madhuran



Scan this QR code to find out how your favourite celebs are coping with the lockdown.

WHAT'S ON TED TALKS



1 THIS TOOL WILL HELP IMPROVE YOUR CRITICAL THINKING BY ERICK WILBERDING

Socrates, one of the founding fathers of Western philosophical thought, was on trial. He wasn't feared for claiming to have all the answers, but rather, for asking too many questions. Erick Wilberding digs into the technique known as the Socratic Method.



2 HOW DO WIND TURBINES WORK? BY REBECCA J. BARTHELMIE AND SARA C. PRYOR

Every 24 hours, wind generates enough kinetic energy to produce roughly 35 times more electricity than humanity uses each day. How can we harness this incredible amount of energy, and is it possible to create a world powered entirely by wind? Rebecca Barthelmie and Sara Pryor dig into the science of wind turbine technology.



3 WHY ARE AIRPLANES SLOWER THAN THEY USED TO BE? BY ALEX GENDLER

In 1996, a British Airways plane flew from New York to London in 2 hours and 53 minutes. Today, however, passengers take twice as long. So why have commercial flights lagged behind? Alex Gendler details the problems facing supersonic flight.



4 CAN YOU OUTSMART THE APPLES AND ORANGES FALLACY? BY ELIZABETH COX

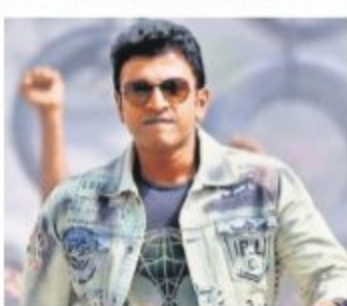
It's 1997. The US Senate has called a hearing about global warming. Some expert witnesses point out that past periods in Earth's history were warmer than the 20th century. Because such variations existed long before humans, they claim the current trend is also the result of natural variation. Can you spot the problem with this argument?



5 AN ELECTION SYSTEM THAT PUTS VOTERS FIRST BY AMBER MCREYNOLDS

Why is it so hard to vote in the US? Voting rights expert Amber McReynolds offers a proven alternative: a new process, already happening in parts of the country, that could bring accountability, transparency and equity to the outdated and sputtering system that American democracy currently relies on.

REGIONAL



YUVARATHNAA (Kannada)

A reputed college that is now on the verge of closing due to the privatisation of the education system and political reasons. The college principal fights against privatisation and the protagonist supports his vision.

Cast: Puneeth Rajkumar, Sayyeshaa Saigal, Sonu Gowda

● Watch on: Amazon Prime Video



ARISHADVARGA (Kannada)

An aspiring actor doubling as an amateur gigolo gets caught up in a sticky situation after accepting a surprise gift from an anonymous client.

Cast: Anju Alva Naik, Nandagopal, Samyukta Homad, Manvitha Kamath

● Watch on: Amazon Prime Video



SAINA (Hindi)

The story of Saina Nehwal, a professional badminton player who once ranked number one in the sport.

Cast: Parineeti Chopra, Manav Kaul, Eshan Naqvi

● Watch on: Amazon Prime Video



THE LAST HOUR (Hindi, series)

A mysterious young shaman, on the run protecting a secret gift, joins hands with a seasoned city police officer to hunt down a dangerous figure from his dark past; when he falls for the officer's young daughter, he is torn between duty and love.

Cast: Sanjay Kapoor, Raima Sen, Karma Takapa, Shaylee Kishen

● Watch on: Amazon Prime Video

All the streaming apps can be accessed on smartphones and smart TVs with Internet connection.



PHOTO PREM (Marathi)

A photo-phobic woman is on the journey to find a photo of herself to be put up in her eulogy.

Cast: Neena Kulkarni, Amita Khopkar, Vikas Hande

● Watch on: Amazon Prime Video



ANVESHANAM (Malayalam)

When Aravind learns that something unexpected has happened to his family, he rushes out to meet them in the hospital, only to find himself in an unforeseen situation.

Cast: Jayasurya, Shruti Rama Chandran, Leona Lishoy

● Watch on: Amazon Prime Video

ENGLISH

WONDER WOMAN 1984

Though she's come into her full powers, Diana Prince maintains a low profile by curating ancient artifacts, and only performing heroic acts incognito. But soon, Diana will have to muster all of her strength, wisdom and courage as she finds herself squaring off against Maxwell Lord and the Cheetah.

Cast: Gal Gadot, Kristen Wiig, Chris Pine, Pedro Pascal

● Watch on: Amazon Prime Video



THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD (series)

After escaping a Georgia plantation, Cora boards a train embarking on a harrowing trip as she seeks true freedom while being hunted by a notorious slave catcher.

Cast: Thos Mdebi, Chase Dillon, Aaron Pierre, Joel Edgerton

● Watch on: Amazon Prime Video



WILD MOUNTAIN THYME

Headstrong farmer Rosemary Muldoon has her heart set on winning her neighbor Anthony Reilly's love. But Anthony seems to have inherited a family curse, and remains oblivious to his beautiful admirer.

Cast: Emily Blunt, Jamie Dornan, Jon Hamm, Christopher Walken

● Watch on: Amazon Prime Video

DUNKIRK

During World War II, soldiers from the British Empire, Belgium and France try to evacuate from the town of Dunkirk during an arduous battle with German forces.

Cast: Harry Styles, Cillian Murphy, Tom Hardy, Fionn Whitehead

● Watch on: Amazon Prime Video

NOW STREAMING

Amazon Prime Video: ₹129 per month



In her film *Colors: White*, city-based Bharatanatyam dancer Savitha Sastry talks about standing true to her beliefs and pursuing them despite criticism

FINDING HER OWN TRUTH

MONIKA MONALISA

The world celebrates International Dance Day on April 29, but for city-based Bharatanatyam dancer Savitha Sastry, every day is a celebration of this art form. Sastry is riding the wave of success of her film *Colors: White*, which was released on YouTube two weeks ago. She

describes the second film in her colours trilogy as her artistic autobiography.

The trilogy juxtaposes the colours of the national flag with the position of women in society. She chose white for herself because they represent truth and peace. The first film *Colors: Green* was released on September 25, 2020.

The film's protagonist - Sastry - talks about her own diffi-

cult journey in Bharatanatyam. When she started, she told mythological stories in classical dance, but she soon started to feel trapped in a box. When she tried to evolve her own style, there were many critics who thought she was questioning a system. It was "not an easy journey" when she tried to create something of her own from the existing knowledge she had.

The movie was an elegant way of storytelling through Bharatanatyam, and while directing, I made sure not to drift away from that. The concept is based on Indian philosophy, so it won't be difficult for people to understand it

A K Srikanth, filmmaker

"When you are learning something that is ancient, you don't question this knowledge. But with dwindling audiences, and people losing interest in classical dance, it was a wake up call for me to find out what has changed in the audience," says Sastry, adding that she was aware that there was a risk.

The short film has also managed to catch global attention. It won the best director award at Paris Play Film Festival, France, it was among the finalists for best short film at the Lisbon Film Rendezvous, and was also nominated for best international narrative at the Toronto Film Festival.

Filmmaker A K Srikanth, who also happens to be Sastry's husband, received the best director award for the film at Rosarito International Film Festival, Mexico.

Srikanth says his primary focus in the movie was the narrator and the objective of the movie. "The movie was an elegant way of storytelling through Bharatanatyam, and while directing, I tried to make sure not to drift away from that," says Srikanth.

Many might assume that being a dance movie, the film caters to a niche audience, but according to Srikanth, it could be the story of "every Indian woman". "The idea, concept and even the meaning of the colour is based on Indian philosophy, so it won't be difficult for people to understand it," Srikanth says, adding that the idea was to reach out to a larger audience.

This summer's shade? Bubble gum pink



PAIRED WITH PANACHE
Anuja Pandey

Who doesn't remember the childhood days and the colourful bright candies we used to get as rewards for the responsibilities we might share with our parents? Those were also the days of the 'candy floss wala' in school fets, and the bubble gum that we would blow out to be the cool kid. Nostalgia creeps in when you reminisce those bright days of childhood. But today's about colours. The natural world is full of colours, colours that attract attention, colours that blend, colours that create extraordinary displays.

And spring-summer trend is about these bright, wonderful hues of our wonder years, the bubbly bubble gum pinks that have been all over the ramp. The bright pinks are the hottest colour of this season for obvious reasons, the shades of this tone are soothing and make a statement. The acclaimed fashion designer Rina Dhaka says, "Bubble gum pink is a summer trend which brings a new summer freshness to the fabric. It's both sporty and works well in Indian terms too. Being a little away from an earlier fluorescent trend, it's flattering and there's no chance of missing a person in this colour."

The pink trend [the electric tones to the bubble gum powdery shades] is not only confined to outfits and dresses, it goes beyond that to influence our accessories as well the sunglasses, clutches, duffle bags in neon pinks or even the furry slippers... there has to be a hint of pink to be summer-ready.

Finally, who wouldn't want to see the world through a pink lens, happy and bright? Mamta Roy, founder Odette.in, a popular accessory brand, says, "From bubble gum Barbie to Tumblr-approved pastel, the colour pink has gone through a transformation over the last two decades. And it isn't going away anytime soon. Pinks are surely having a moment."

Be it a business jacket in powder pink or a bright pop-

lin oversized shirt, a hot pink leather skirt or a romantic flowing outfit in solid pink, it's just everywhere, propelling it to our top fashion wish list.

Shalini Jaikaria (Creative Director, Geisha Designs) shares her view about this kaftan from their design house as she says, "Inspired by the bright colours of Skittles/gems... the dress is designed to take you on an exploration of childhood 'sweet' memories, into a world which was innocent and secure. where we were care-free and all our needs were met. An easy kaftan for indulgence at the comfort of one's home."

Even while you are within the confines of your home,

you certainly must feel good and pinks alleviate so much of stress. The key to wearing this shade is to take it in everyday wear - sporty outfits could be teamed with pink sneakers and shades, a pair of powder pink pants could be worn with a printed pink cot-



Pink can be used in accessories like sunglasses too | PIC: ODETE

ton top. Mix it with other colours, keep it solid or accessorise with the pinks - there are no don'ts with this trend. Millennial pink is the colour to invest in as anti-neutral is in, hence pushing bubble gum pink officially on the fashion map and in your wardrobe.

(The author is a social media influencer and lifestyle coach)



A kaftan in bubble gum colours by Geisha Designs

CITY READ

Search tool launched for medicines

OKCredit has announced the launch of a website - Co-aid.in - to help people in distress discover verified leads for Covid-19 medicines and equipment. The portal provides real-time information on the availability of medicines across India and the contact numbers of stores for making enquiries. Users can search for availability by either entering the location or the pin code on the portal.

Call for volunteers for Covid-19 relief work

COV-AID@BLR, a 150-bed, oxygenated Covid-19 treatment centre at Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru, is seeking volunteer doctors, nurses, paramedics and other healthcare staff, who are willing to offer support at the Covid-19 treatment centre. Individuals able to manage data entry and other administrative services are also requested to volunteer. Those interested can write to COVAid@bialairport.com



ARE YOU GAME?
Anusha Ganapathi

(This economics graduate spends her leisure time preparing for the zombie apocalypse)

Resident Evil Village is my first game in the RE series. It is not like I have played a lot of other horror games either, but now that the ordeal is over, I can unashamedly tell you that it was a good game, easy. I spent all 15 hours of gameplay anticipating a moment of terror more blood-curdling than the last, and it never came to pass. Unlike the complex humanising backstories added to action-based games in PS4 exclusives, Resident Evil remains pure to its genre. You do not empathise with the lead character in addition to being constantly chilled. Village is just your matter-of-fact grisly, nauseating horror.

Village follows on the story of RE 7, and for newbies to the series like me, the game offers a helpful "Previously on RE". The game starts like a typical horror movie, in a scene of domestic bliss. In a matter of minutes, the scene overturns. Ethan Winters loses his wife Mia, and finds that his baby has been kidnapped. Stuck in



IN THE RESIDENT EVIL VILLAGE



a desolate village (enter title credits) in Europe, Ethan

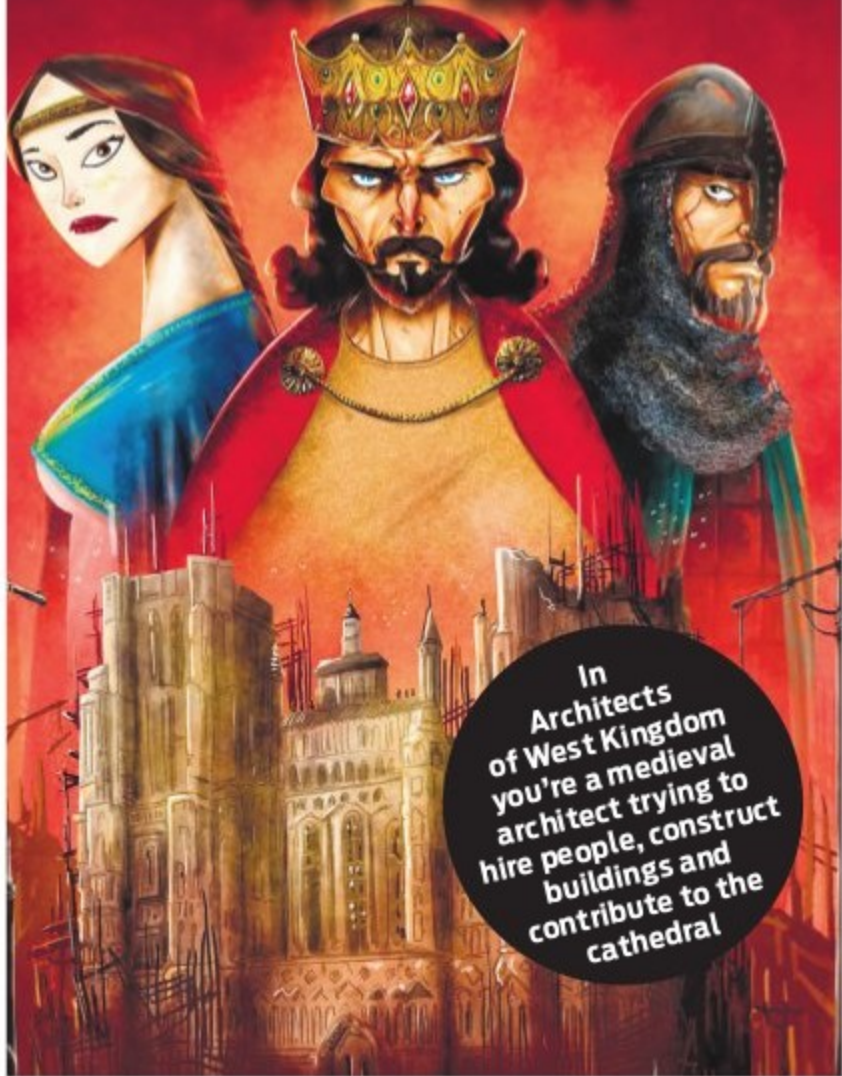
trudges along the unfriendly environment, with silhouettes foreshadowing the nightmarish places he would visit during his journey.

The gameplay is largely linear, in that the game hurls you in sight of monsters that propel the story forward. Combat does close to nothing in helping Ethan Winters. Resources and ammunition are limited. Destroying lycans and zombi-

fied-villagers leaves us with less than how much we had to begin with. We are left at the mercy of the baby-faced merchant "Duke", who buys our trophies and sells us some expensive add-ons. Did I mention that the game play also pairs the first-person experience with a jump scare too many? Yes. The game basically hates gamers. Despite it all, you progress forward, just to see if you can handle more gore than you could a minute ago. There are some palliatives, of which one is Castle Dimitrescu, which is also the "easiest" part of the game: the furnishings are extremely beautiful and realistic, and you can avoid most monsters by running away and shutting room doors.

Village has range - the villains that we are forced to encounter cover the diversity from swamp monsters, vampires, dolls, to even indestructible metal giants. Village is also smart; in that it makes you feel smart. While terrifying to behold, beneath every combat sequence is a simple puzzle waiting to be solved. Unlocking doors, finding the enemies' pain points, and hoarding the right ammo combo while small wins, are very satisfying. I rate RE Village with a full on the dread meter.

ARCHITECTS AT PLAY



In Architects of West Kingdom you're a medieval architect trying to hire people, construct buildings and contribute to the cathedral



(Arjun is a gamer, book lover and an all-round renaissance man)

Expectations were high for Garphill Games after their North Sea trilogy wrapped up in 2016 - what would they do next? The answer wasn't long in coming, as Architects of the West Kingdom would kick off a second trilogy of games in 2018 to great acclaim; and that's the game we're taking a look at today.

When it comes to mechanisms, Garphill seems to treat each new game as a challenge to design a new and interesting twist on the familiar genre of worker placement; and Architects certainly follows this pattern. Yes, it's worker placement; and yet, no, it's not really like anything else you might've

played. As for what you're doing, you're medieval architects skulking around trying to hire people, construct buildings and contribute your efforts to the cathedral - if they'll let you.

In a fashion that they would go on to explore more in the subsequent games of the West Kingdom trilogy, Architects introduces the concept of virtue. Stay on the moral path and your virtue will rise; however, associate with low-lives, drop by the black market or even burgle the tax coffers and your halo will undoubtedly be tarnished a little. Still, a little skulduggery could get you closer to victory but whichever path you take has pros and cons to consider - the virtuous aren't allowed to partake of the black market's wares, while the corrupt can't help construct the cathedral. Swings and roundabouts, everywhere you



look and that's even before we talk about how you use your workers.

Unlike many other games in this genre, Architects showers you with a deluge of workers right at the very beginning and you soon see why - actions are almost always more powerful or better the more workers you have in a particular location, but you can only send out one per turn. So you have to slowly build up your agents to work towards whatever your objectives are, and your opponents will undoubtedly be doing the same. This could've resulted in a game that felt very multiplayer solitaire - you're all playing

together, but you're all mostly just doing your own thing. That's where Architects lets you see the dagger hidden in its other hand, because apparently medieval architecture was a fairly cutthroat business.

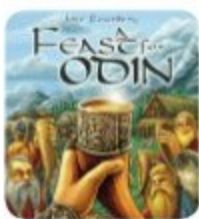
You see, one of the actions you can take is sending one of your workers to the town centre to round up a bunch of your opponent's workers and take them into custody. In the short term, that's definitely thrown a wrench into whatever plans they might've had for that location and it's cutting off access to some of their workers; on a subsequent turn, though, you could turn them in at the guardhouse where they'll be tossed into prison and you'll be compensated for your civic-minded ways with some silver for your trouble. This sets up a Looney Tunes-esque cycle of cause and effect, where there's a steady stream of workers being tossed into prison and subsequently released only to be tossed back

in shortly afterwards - it's one of those board game mechanisms that perhaps doesn't hold up to extremely detailed scrutiny, but it's both very funny and an ingenious way of adding player interaction to what might otherwise feel like a disconnected game. You're always keeping an eye on your opponents, and the opportunities you might be giving them, every time you send out a worker; and that adds an interesting edge to that decision every single turn.

In my opinion, Raiders of the North Sea is Garphill's finest game - its particular take on worker placement still feels fresh and interesting every time I play it. Architects of the West Kingdom needs a few more plays before I'm certain, but it might just take that top spot away from Raiders - it's sharp, it's clever, it doesn't overstay its welcome and it's got a lot of replayability right off the bat.

A FEAST FOR ODIN

It might be five years old now, but we've managed to play A Feast for Odin a few times in the last week or so and it's as good as ever. It seems strange to use the term 'elegant' to describe such a monstrous box with so many components jammed inside, but the whole is definitely more than the sum of its (many!) parts.



CHAI: TEA FOR 2

Tea for 2 is currently doing quite well over on Kickstarter. As the name suggests, it's a two-player spinoff of the well-reviewed Chai, which is a delightful light family-friendly game. Tea for 2 retains the same gorgeous aesthetic, but features dice worker placement - one of my favourite mechanisms - its foundation.



VOIDFALL

Voidfall's credits seem like a wishlist. Published by Mindclash Games, the people behind Anachrony and Trickerion, check. Designed by David Turci (Anachrony) and Nigel Buckle (Imperium), check. Art by the wonderful Ian O'Toole, who might be the best artist in the industry right now? Check. I don't recall an announcement that's whetted the appetite quite as much as this one.



'KOTIGOBBA 3' HAS POTENTIAL TO MAKE ₹ 100 CRORE IF RELEASED IN THEATRES'

...says producer Surappa Babu, who rubbished rumours of plans to release the film on an OTT platform

CE FEATURES

F all had gone according to plan, *Kotigobba 3* would have hit theatres on April 29. However, the Sudeep-starrer movie has been pushed indefinitely due to the raging pandemic. The makers had even planned a pre-release event, which too stands postponed. Meanwhile, rumours were doing the rounds that Shiva Karthik's debut directorial was looking at an OTT release. Further, it was reported that producer Surappa Babu is in talks with a streaming channel, which is said to have offered to buy the film for ₹ 35 crore. However, the producer rubbished this. According to him, *Kotigobba 3* has been made with a budget of ₹ 70 crore, so why would he sell the film at half the price for an OTT release. "First of all, I have no intention for *Kotigobba 3* to take the OTT route. Second, let me clarify that we did get an offer

from a digital platform to release the film for a certain price, which I thought was not feasible. It is a film with a good content, and when I can make business of ₹ 100 crore when released in theatres, why would I think of releasing it on a streaming platform," asserts Surappa Babu.

The makers of the film are ready with the first copy, and plan to put it forth the censor board when they resume work. Story written by Sudeep, *Kotigobba 3* has been one of the most anticipated films of 2021. It boasts of an ensemble cast and marks the debut of heroine, Madonna Sebastian. The cast also comprises Shraddha Das, Aftab Shivdasani, Tabla Nani, Ravi Shankar and Rajesh Nataranga. Ashika Ranganath will be appearing in a special song. The film's music is composed by Arjun Janya, and has Shekar Chandru handling the camerawork.

Surappa Babu



Sudeep

SALMAN KHAN ON RADHEPIRACY ISSUE:

'You will get into a lot of trouble with the cyber cell'

CE FEATURES

O wing to the pandemic, Salman Khan's recent Eid release, *Radhe*, had a simultaneous release in theatres and OTT. It released on ZeePlex on a pay-per-view model. However, like most films nowadays, *Radhe* too was a victim of online piracy.

Salman Khan took to social media to address this issue and posted a statement that said, "We offered you

to watch our film *Radhe* at a reasonable price of ₹ 249 per view. In spite of that pirated sites are streaming *Radhe* illegally which is a serious crime. Cyber cell is taking action against all these illegal pirated sites. Please don't participate in piracy or the cyber cell will take action against you as well. Please understand you will get into a lot of trouble with the cyber cell."

The Prabhudheva directorial also stars Disha Patani, Randeep Hooda, Jackie Shroff among others.



Salman Khan



John Travolta and Bruce Willis

Bruce Willis, John Travolta to join hands after 27 years for *Paradise City*

CE FEATURES

Bruce Willis and John Travolta will be teaming up again for Chuck Russell-directed action entertainer *Paradise City*. They had worked together previously 27 years ago in Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction*. The shooting of the new film will begin on May 17 in Maui, Hawaii.

Willis plays renegade bounty hunter, Ryan Swan, who must find his way through the Hawaiian crime world to take revenge on the kingpin, played by Travolta, who murdered his father. The project is said to be on the lines of *Miami Vice*, but with bounty hunters instead of cops. Thai actress and model Praya Lundberg will be playing the female lead in the film.

Corey Large, who has produced and executive produced several Willis features including *Cosmic Sin*, *Breach*, *Apex*, *Marauders*, *Acts of Violence*, *First Kill*, *Fire With Fire*, *Extraction*, *Vice*, *The Prince* and *Precious Cargo*, is co-writing *Paradise City* with his writing partner Ed John Drake. Large had been reportedly planning to make this film with Willis and Travolta since 2006.

CE FEATURES

A ctor Karan Vohra has joined the cast of the show *Pinjara Khubsurti Ka*. He will be playing a cop named Raghav Shastri in the show. The actor says Raghav is very different from the usual cop character in OTT projects

"I am excited to play Raghav Shastri, who is not your normal cop. He has a very gruff, Dabangg-like personality, but also has a fun side to him. I like such characters. Raghav is madly in love with Mayura and he will do all that he can to win her trust and ultimately her affection," Karan said, in a statement. He also emphasized that it would be a refreshing change with trference to the character that I am playing this time around and I hope they will appreciate how I take this role ahead. I can assure them that Raghav will definitely bring a lot of drama in Omkar and Mayura's life."



Karan Vohra

Karan Vohra joins the cast of *Pinjara Khubsurti Ka*

CHRIS ROCK WANTS SEQUEL TO HIS NEW HORROR FLICK *SPIRAL*

ACTOR Chris Rock hopes his upcoming horror thriller, *Spiral: From The Book Of Saw* deserves a sequel with him reprising his original role.

"I hope this movie is like 'Creed'. In the sense that 'Creed' is technically like *Rocky 7*. So, hopefully there's more 'Spirals' and hopefully I'm in more 'Spirals'," he said in a recent interview.

Talking about how bagged the film, he said: "I was at a friend's wedding and they introduced me to the head of Lionsgate. I was like, 'Lionsgate? Oh, 'Saw'. They called me up. I was just poking fun at the Lionsgate about 'Saw!'" *Spiral* is the ninth release in the *Saw* film series.



AMY ADAMS: MERYL STREEP SHOWED ME HOW TO STAY CALM ON SET

AMY Adams has revealed that Meryl Streep taught her that knitting as a hobby could be used as an effective strategy to combat work-space anxiety and the associated soaring stress levels.

The two actors had shared screen spacem while playing nuns in the 2008 drama *Doubt*. She also added, "She's a big knitter; she's very crafty. She did it in two parts - to sort of create a bonding experience between our characters, and also probably she felt sorry for me because I tend to be a bit energetic. So I'm sure she thought it was a great way for me to direct my energy instead of just skipping around in my (nun's) habit."



Though some thrillers have been made using this concept, this is the first time it is being used for the romantic comedy genre

— Jayanth Seeg S, director

first time it is being used for the romantic comedy genre," explains the director. In fact Jayanth did give a thriller a try, but after it didn't work out, he decided to switch genres.

Sharing how he went about this rom-com, Jayanth said he reconnected with an old friend, Sheela, on social media. "This became my one-liner— about two good friends connecting in the time of Covid. The story revolves around the lockdown," says the director, who has named Shruti's character as Sheela. "The two lead actors are former college-mates who rekindle their romance after a virtual meeting during the pandemic. It also looks at how the lockdown affects their relationship. This is the crux of the story," he further adds.

Interestingly, the entire episode has been shot individually without the actors coming face to face. "Since the story happens during the lockdown, we wanted to shoot it keeping the actual situation in mind.

Love in the Time of Covid, directed by Jayanth Seeg and starring Shruti Prakash and Rakesh Maiya, is a romantic comedy that is set in the lockdown

IN A FIRST, KANNADA FILM SHOT USING 'COMPUTER SCREEN' CONCEPT

A SHARADHAA

L OVE in the Time of Covid is an upcoming romantic comedy drama that will be an experiment of sorts. Director Jayanth Seeg S, who has channelled the film with a computer screen concept, has roped in former *Bigg Boss Kannada* contestant, actor and singer Shruti Prakash, along with Rakesh Maiya, in the lead. This shooting for this feature film is complete and post-production work is now on. Set during the lockdown, Jayanth's romcom is inspired by *Searching*, a film that was first made using the 'computer screen' concept. Another film that employs this concept is Malayalam film, *CU Soon*. "In this method the film is shot on a computer screen, and is more device-based. Though some thrillers have been made using this concept, this is the



Shruti Prakash

LOVE ON SCREEN

Shruti was excited to shoot for a film in the comfort of her home. "This is a film which was shot without meeting the hero. Imagine romancing anyone without even seeing the person. This is what I did," she chuckles.

There's a lot of usage of social media— all of this to keep it realistic. Every episode was shot separately. This film uses a completely new technology," he says. Apart from the lead actors, the film's cast also comprises Apoorva Bharadwaj, Goutham HC, Shankar Murthy, Shravan Aithal, and Pavan Venugopal. The movie consists of four songs and brings together a couple of music directors. The film's music and background are by Bharath B J of *Simple Agi Ondh Love Story* fame. The original soundtrack is by Pravana Karanth and Sanjeevini Shastry. The film's camerawork is handled by Pradeep B Reddy and has costumes designed by Shachina Haggar.

The film which was shot in December, will be ready for release in theatres in about two months. "We will take a call about the medium of release once the film is ready," says Jayanth, who has previously worked as an assistant director for Rakshit Shetty's *Ulida-varu Kandante*. He is also the writer of *Girigtle*, a short story for the anthology *Katha Sangama*, starring Raj B Shetty. The director, who has worked on the visual effects of *Arishadvarga* made his debut with 96. "It is a thriller starring Sheetal Shetty and is yet to see its release and we are in talks with an OTT platform. *Love in the Time of Covid* will be my second project," he says.



Rakesh Maiya

ZACK SNYDER: I WANT TO MAKE MORE DC FILMS IN FUTURE

FILMMAKER Zack Snyder says his fans want him to make more DC films, and he hopes Warner Bros will let him do so. Snyder has directed DC films such as *Batman V Superman: Dawn Of Justice*, *Man Of Steel*, and *Watchmen*. The filmmaker also mentioned that the fan movements around the DC universe are very strong and their intentions are "so pure," that he has always harbored huge respect for them. Headed that he hopes the studio acknowledges the massive fandom that keeps wanting more. Snyder was halfway through the making *Justice League* in 2017, when he took a break to mourn the death of his daughter. Joss Whedon replaced him and changed the film, a move that was criticised by fans.

